THE RISE AND FALL OF SPY, BY JOSEPH NOCERA

DECEMBER 24, 1990 • $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Elie Kedourie: Hamlet in the Gulf • Mark Stevens: Getting high on low art

BEASTS OF THE BELTWAY

King Kong (Richard Darman) vs. Godzilla (John Sununu)

By Fred Barnes

GOP carnage in the House

by Sidney Blumenthal

The unearthing of an atrocity
Nikolai Tolstoy

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CORRESPONDENCE

Skin tests

To the editors:

What is most disturbing about Linda Chavez's article "Rainbow Collision" (November 19) is her apparent willingness to accept that if Hispanics are not below a baseline (measured by the hardship or lack of power endured by blacks) and not equal to or above white success, then they should be content with where they find themselves as a political and social entity. However, as minority populations increase in numbers (and as Ms. Chavez acknowledges, Hispanics are becoming the largest minority group), and the strains on our government appear, some form of retribution will come down on minorities.

This is one of the fundamental reasons strong political advocacy and recognition of "legitimate" minority status is essential. Politicians and leaders are seeking to create a redoubt behind which we can continue to fight for full equality and zero ethnic and racial intolerance. Until then, Hispanics should not be satisfied with the relative success and lack of enmity they have faced so far. I, for one, am not willing to rely on the American public's beneficence to shield my community from harm.

JOHN PETER SUAREZ
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

Linda Chavez is both right and wrong when she says that Hispanics have more in common with whites than with blacks. The key to this seeming contradiction is the fact that Hispanics are a multiracial group with tremendous diversity in color and phenotype. The vast majority of Americans are tutored (via schools and the media) to think of the United States as a biracial nation. Whether a Hispanic feels more "white" or "black" usually depends on his/her skin color and racial features.

Ms. Chavez is wrong when she says Hispanics never experienced segregation. In Texas, for example, segregation was enforced even though it was not mandated by law (see *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas* by David Montejano, University of Texas Press). Both color and class can determine the amount of social acceptance individual Hispanics receive from whites.

The rise of the uneasy black/Hispanic alliance Chavez describes is probably related to the growing political power of poorer, dark-skinned Hispanics who didn't benefit from the official "white" status light-skinned Hispanics enjoyed. It was they who forced the schools and media to refer to Hispanics as "people of color" as opposed to "white persons of Spanish surname."

A. D. POWELL
Madison, Wisconsin

Party lines

To the editors:

Your editorial "Beating the System" (November 5) further solidified my decade-long opinion that legislative systems are no longer needed in a technological society. Some state government should eliminate its legislature and have the constituents vote directly on all legislation. Given the age of touch-tone dialing and 1-900 numbers, certainly the logistics of this could be worked out. If the governor-elect did not like a particular bill voted for by the public, he could veto it. It could only be overturned by two-thirds of the electorate. Eventually, we could even replace Congress.

T. F. FELKER JR.
Birmingham, Michigan

Baby talk

To the editors:

In "Poor Conceptions" (November 2) Ann Hulbert has misconstrued the findings and, more important, the implications of my research. First, I want to make it clear that I do not advocate teen childbearing for the poor; rather, I describe the grim socioeconomic reasons that, as society stands today, make early childbearing culturally rational behavior for some poor women.

Second, Ms. Hulbert claims that my neonatal mortality research is "drawn from only three states in the late 1970s" and that trends have reversed since then. Both claims are incorrect. I have replicated my original research using more recent data for the nation as a whole. In the 1980s the babies of black women who postponed childbearing until their mid-20s or older continued to have *higher* death rates than the babies of black teen mothers.

Ms. Hulbert accuses me of invoking a romanticized, outdated notion when I discuss kin networks. This accusation may stem from her apparent confusion of the "kin network" concept with that of the "family." Kin networks are informal systems of exchange, credit, and social support, first described in an urban community by Carol Stack. Ms. Stack's

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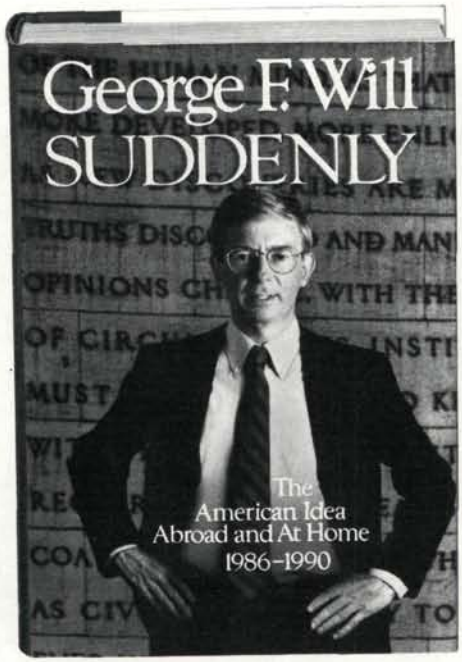
National Bestseller
and
National Antidote
to
Sloppy Thinking



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FROM WASHINGTON

Picky, picky

This may be the first war that was ever nitpicked to death before it could start. Hawks are getting frustrated. Expect a lot of dark brooding soon about the decadence of American democracy in the face of evil. But the nitpickin's are pretty good, and nits ought to be picked before the dying starts.

Like his flags 'n' furloughs campaign for the presidency, George Bush's campaign for war against Iraq is mostly disingenuous. No doubt he sincerely wants this policy, just as he sincerely wanted to be president. Those (including me) who have accused Bush of shallow, feel-good politics—never calling for sacrifice, never delivering bad news—must recant. He is a man possessed. And his real reasons for risking war are good. Trouble is, they are not sufficient. And his usual read-my-polls, issue-of-the-week techniques of persuasion seem especially hollow when there is blood at stake. It matters more that he can't possibly mean much of what he says.

A few examples:

1. Bush says that Iraq is quickly acquiring nuclear weapons. This is offered as a justification for war, and a reason for not procrastinating if Saddam Hussein fails to obey the United Nations resolution by January 15. Polls show that nukes are what concern Americans the most. But the U.N. resolution says nothing about nuclear weapons. And Secretary of State James Baker has virtually promised that there will be no war if Hussein obeys the resolution. (Otherwise, why should Hussein oblige?) If Hussein can avoid war without giving up his nukes, those nukes cannot be a justification for going to war.

Anyway, almost no one believes that Iraq could have a useful nuclear weapon in the few months it would take to give the embargo a better test. Who thinks President Bush really believes it? Not me. And if nukes are our concern, there are less costly ways to deal with them than all-out war, as the Israelis demonstrated in 1981.

2. Lately Bush's emphasis has been on economics: "the devastating damage that is being done every day" by high oil prices. This is offered as another reason not to wait. Developing countries, Eastern Europe, and the U.S. itself "are being victimized by this dictator's rape of his neighbor." But it is Bush's threat of war, right or wrong—not Hussein's invasion—that is causing high oil prices. Those prices plummeted $4 a barrel in just a few hours on peace hopes after Bush announced that Baker would meet with Hussein. There is no oil shortage. An announcement that the embargo would be given at least a year to work would bring oil prices back to the low 20s. The economic effects of high oil prices are a result of Bush's policy. They cannot be a justification for it.

3. Likewise the hostages. Early on Bush was admirably staunch about not letting hostages dictate American policy. Now he invokes them. But Hussein only seized hostages because of the threat of war. The surest way to free them would be to abandon that threat. Yes, to give up the war simply because of hostages would be craven and shortsighted. But the plight of the hostages cannot logically be invoked to justify the war, either.

4. Then there is the bathos of the siege at the American Embassy in Kuwait. This also is Bush's doing, not Hussein's. Those diplomats could leave at any time. If Kuwait must be freed at all costs, then making a big deal over keeping the embassy open may be a sensible tactic. But the embassy is merely a symbol. It adds nothing to Hussein's malevolence in wishing to absorb Kuwait that he also wishes to shut our embassy. And our wish to keep our embassy open adds nothing to the case for freeing Kuwait at all costs.

5. The embargo. This was Bush's idea, remember? Now he belittles it. He never thought it would work, he announced December 4. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney told a Senate committee the day before: "Given the nature of the regime, given Saddam Hussein's brutality . . . , his very tight control of that society, his ability to allocate resources for the military, their ability to produce their own food . . . , he can ride [sanctions] out." All these factors were as evident in August as they are now. Was the embargo just a propaganda device to rally the nation and the world for sterner measures? Was the administration bluffing then, or is it bluffing now? Take your pick.

6. Regarding the general awfulness of Saddam Hussein, the Hitler analogy, and so on. These increasingly lurid arias would be more convincing if they were accompanied by some slight acknowledgment that the administration was wrong to have been chumming the implacable madman-monster-killer-rapist as recently as August 1 of this very year.

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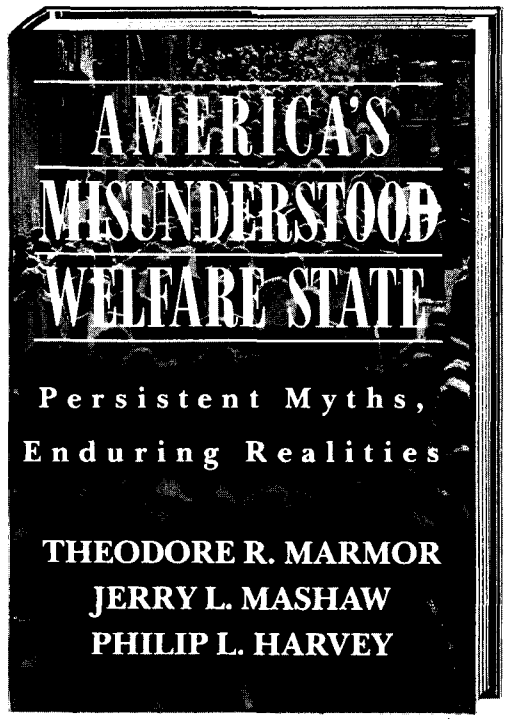
Our social welfare programs are taking a bum rap.



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 24, 1990

SEPARATION ANXIETY

With the United States on the brink of war in the Persian Gulf, Americans haven't been able to spare much attention for a crisis that is less immediately acute but in the long run certainly as momentous, possibly more so: the continuing, and increasingly chaotic, dissolution of the Soviet Union. The process makes front-page news often enough—as it did when Mikhail Gorbachev called for citizen vigilantes to stop black marketeers and installed a former KGB man and the ex-commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan to run the Interior Ministry—but there's little discussion about what America's response should be. If there's famine, this country will want to help alleviate it. But what's the best way to do that? And as the Soviet Union, which has already ceased to be Soviet (in the sense of being Communist), ceases also to be a Union, and as real power drains away from Mr. Gorbachev's central government, shouldn't the U.S. government be placing more of its bets on the various republics? In any case, the United States is under no moral obligation to help prop up the crumbling edifice of the prisonhouse of nations.

All the signs are that the multiple economic and political crises of the Soviet Union are rising toward some kind of crescendo in 1991. Food prices at unofficial markets have tripled during the last year in Moscow. So have the hours people spend waiting in line to buy what little is available at state stores. People are working less and tempers are frayed—not only because of the shortages, but because the citizenry knows that the system, not nature, is to blame. Food exists. When it's not spoiling in storage or in transit, it's being hoarded in the countryside or diverted from the state distribution system for sale on the black market. The obvious solution is the non-black market: give farmland to the peasants, let middlemen buy from them and sell in town, turn illegal "profiteers" into legal entrepreneurs and make them compete with each other, thereby putting some eventual restraint on prices. But Mr. Gorbachev keeps postponing the plunge.

Fourteen of the fifteen Soviet republics have passed sovereignty declarations, in effect refusing to take orders from Moscow. (The exception is Kirgizia, which is nevertheless negotiating recognition pacts with Russia and other republics.) There are constant disputes about whose law takes precedence, which does nothing to dampen public cynicism. The possibility of serious violence is growing. Latvia is refusing to allow electricity to flow into installations of the Soviet army. Anti-Russian agitation in Kirgizia, on the Chinese border, has caused 40,000 to flee this year. The president of Azerbaijan appealed on Soviet TV to the secretary general of the United Nations and to President Bush, asking for peacekeeping forces (including U.S. Marines!) to protect his province from Armenia. The city council of Lujansk, in the Ukraine, has announced that it will secede and join Russia if the Ukraine becomes an independent country. The Ukranian government says such secession will be put down by force.

Meanwhile, the political chaos is interfering with production, causing real shortages of medicine, electricity, and trucks. The rate of violent crime has exploded in the cities—up 49 percent this year in Belgorod, 55 percent in Kharkov—and the rate of unsolved crime has doubled, according to a recent Interior Ministry report. Politicians quarrel over ideology and policy, and sometimes just over power. The radical-democratic mayor of Leningrad, Anatoly Sobchak, has been demoted to speaker of the City Council because his fellow radical democrats thought he had too much authority. And Mr. Gorbachev, like a mechanic trying to get a hopeless lemon to start, opens the hood of the Soviet Constitution every six weeks or so and tinkers, expanding the nominal powers of his unelected presidency even as his rivals and the population pay steadily less heed to his decisions.

The Bush administration and other Western governments continue to treat Mr. Gorbachev as the leader of the Soviet Union—as, indeed, in foreign and military policy, he still is. He controls the Soviet Union's veto in the Security Council of the United Nations, so it was necessary for Mr. Bush to put up with his dithering (and help him get a $6 billion "loan" from the rich Arabs) in order to gain his support for the Security Council resolution on use of force in the Gulf. Germany is sending

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20 million food packages and at least $1 billion in new food credits to Mr. Gorbachev. He has asked for—and will probably get—$1 billion more from the European Community, $1 billion from France, and $1.5 billion from Spain. And if famine looms this winter and he formally requests aid from the United States, Mr. Gorbachev will get that, too.

The chances are that much of this well-intentioned assistance will be wasted unless the United States and other nations organize themselves to see that it isn't. If the central government (which controls the ports, the railways, and the distribution system of the country) is left to its own devices, then the grain, trucks, and medicines are likely to be diverted into the black market, just as Soviet-produced goods are.

What's the answer? Well, part of it, as suggested by Dimitri Simes of the Carnegie Endowment, is for Western nations to form a donors' committee and demand that the central government, the republics, and city governments stop quarreling and agree upon an honest distribution system (which the donors will monitor) to make sure that emergency aid reaches people who need it. Furthermore, the aid ought to be contingent upon movement toward economic reform. If the IMF and the World Bank impose conditions on Third World countries in return for assistance, why not upon the Soviet Union?

Europe and America have an obvious practical interest in doing what they can to ensure that the manifold changes convulsing the territories of one-sixth of the globe be carried out as peacefully as possible. But it does not necessarily follow that they have a corresponding interest in the maintenance of the Soviet Union as such. Indeed, there is some great justice at work in the erosion of the world's last great empire. The odds for a supranational state of any kind are not good. And a supranational state held together by coercion would inevitably be unstable or repressive or both. Payments from the West would do little to make it any less of a threat to its neighbors and its own citizens alike. If a supranational state—or, more likely, a loose federation—is to be, it will have to be founded on voluntary association. And that means the republics must be free to go. And should they choose association with European nations rather than with their former comrades-in-chains, they must be free to do that, too.

We in the West have a moral, political, and ideological interest in freedom. Where there is a conflict, we tend to value individual freedom over national liberation, just as we tend to value the individual over the state. But in the case of the Soviet Union—its citizens and its republics—it is not clear that there is a conflict between the liberty of people and the liberty of peoples. With only a few exceptions (Mr. Gorbachev may be among them), those in the Soviet Union who are most active in support of democratic rights are also those who support national rights.

The Soviet Union, as currently constituted, is doomed. For it ever to have a chance to live peacefully and prosperously in the modern world, whether in the form of many countries or one, it will first have to die as an empire. Mr. Gorbachev has been slow to understand this. It seems increasingly likely that the forces of freedom and liberty that he himself unblocked will oblige him to retire from the scene. He is now the only major national or provincial head of government "from San Francisco to Vladivostok" (as Jiri Dientsbier, the Czech foreign minister, likes to say) who does not hold his position by virtue of a popular canvass. This has undermined not only his legitimacy but also the legitimacy of the Union government as against the republics. For Mr. Gorbachev, there is a graceful way out: advancing the date for nationwide presidential elections, now scheduled for 1995, and declining to be a candidate.

Mr. Gorbachev is emotionally committed to concluding and implementing a strategic arms reduction treaty. It's probably in the American interest that he stay in office long enough to do so. For the time being, in any case, either he or his successor in the Soviet presidency is going to be in charge of the Soviet Union's foreign and military policies; and it's hard to imagine a successor who would be more committed to cooperation with the West than Mr. Gorbachev has been. But even if he weren't, Mr. Bush couldn't very well suggest to Mr. Gorbachev that he leave office or show favoritism toward rivals such as Boris Yeltsin. But it's simple prudence for the administration to look beyond the present to a time when Mr. Gorbachev and/or "the center" will no longer be the appropriate focus. The United States ought to push for expanded diplomatic representation all around the Soviet Union, establishing consulates in all the republics that someday could serve as embassies. It ought to intensify democracy-training projects at the local and republic levels through the National Endowment for Democracy, the USIA, and the Agency for International Development. It ought to deepen contacts with local leaders who will run their regions in the future. The United States does not have to hasten the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It just has to prepare for the inevitable.

NOTEBOOK

WRITING AND SKIN: "There is an acute dividedness over nearly everything," the writer Paul West told *The New York Times* about the fiction jury of the National Book Award. His fellow jurors, he said, were acting on "ethnic concerns, ideology, and moral self-righteousness." The *Times* did its best to look away from the burden of West's accusation, and chose a bit bizarrely to wonder instead why little-known publishers and little-known writers copped the fiction nominations—as if well-known writers have not won the award without deserving it, as if well-known publishers have some kind of divine right to the prize. Among the

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nominees, the *Times* observed a little ominously, "Only [Joyce Carol] Oates has a wide reputation in the United States." A few years ago, remember, the paper waxed indignant when Larry Heinemann, also guilty of an unwide reputation, won the award. The *Times*'s solicitude for its advertisers is affecting. But the NBA this year appears to have been guilty of something worse than a failure to meet the Oates standard. If Mr. West was right, then the fiction jury succumbed to the most corrosive acid in contemporary American culture: the view that American culture, like American politics, must be organized around the principle of proportional sexual and racial representation. This was to be the year for people of gender and people of color. The chairman of the jury is one of the most militant boosters of feminism in the American academy. Another of the jurors, a mediocre novelist whose work is consecrated to the spirits of women and blacks, accused the candid Mr. West of racism. In the event, the NBA went to Charles Johnson for *Middle Passage*, a novel about a freed slave who finds himself on a ship headed for Africa. Charles Johnson is a fine, independent-minded writer; and in his critical writing he has shown himself to be immune to precisely the orthodoxy to which he may partly owe his award. At the awards ceremony it was Ralph Ellison, whose decades-long silence has been an incalculably large blow against honesty and decency in the discussion of this fevered subject, who restored the moral balance of the occasion: "You don't write out of your skin, for God's sake, you write out of your imagination." Mr. Johnson agreed. So do we.

UNDETERRED: Don't worry about the Iraqi nuclear threat, the argument goes. Even if Iraq does develop the bomb, Saddam Hussein won't use it, on account of his fear of retaliation. The argument is familiar: it's called deterrence theory. The only weird part is who's advancing it. "Deterrence," contends Ira Shorr, program director of SANE/FREEZE, "is a part of political reality. Iraq would know that using a weapon like that invites massive retaliation." Hang on, didn't groups like SANE/FREEZE used to specialize in arguing that nuclear deterrence was a snare and a delusion? And didn't they organize some fairly large demonstrations on the premise that threats of nuclear retaliation were not only immoral but also the surest road to all-around annihilation? And wasn't it only a few years ago that some of the same doves who are now confident that deterrence will deter Saddam Hussein from using nukes in battle were questioning whether it would deter Ronald Reagan from doing the same? Just asking.

HAVE IT YOUR WAY: In November, under pressure from the Rev. Donald Wildmon and CLEAR-TV (Christian Leaders for Responsible Television), Burger King took out big newspaper ads to issue an "Open Letter to the American People," affirming its support for "traditional family values on television, especially the importance of the family." In the future, Burger King promised, it would support only programs that reflected those values. Then, two days before Thanksgiving, CBS aired "The Stranger Within," a made-for-TV movie featuring Rick Schroder as a psychopath who impersonates the long-lost kidnapped son of a woman played by Kate Jackson. The loving son turns out to be a homicidal maniac. He shoots the family dog, attempts to drown his pseudo-mother's boyfriend, and finally tries to bury "mom" and a policeman alive. She pumps a few slugs into him, he goes after her with a hammer, and another cop finishes him off. Brought to you by? Good guess. BK spokesman Michael Evans explained to *The Los Angeles Times* that the program "was found to be within the guidelines the company has set forth."

INDIANA STAN: Curious tales have been surfacing about Stanislaw Tyminski, the Polish-Canadian-Peruvian ex-non-entity who forced Lech Walesa into a runoff for the Polish presidency. Mr. Tyminski is a businessman who combines a history of flaky right-fringe politics with a penchant for traveling via Tripoli and populating his campaign staff with veterans of the secret police. Now comes word, via *The New York Times*, that he journeyed up the River Ucayali, in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon, to experiment with the hallucinogenic drug ayahuasca: "After the prayers and celestial songs, I asked him if he was high," recalled the medicine man who guided Mr. Tyminksi on his trip. " 'Are you having visions?' I asked. He said, 'Yes, I am in an airplane flying.' 'As its pilot or cook?' I asked. He said: 'Cook.' " The medicine man paused, took a deep drag on his smoking materials, and observed, "It takes a long time to evolve to be the pilot." Wow. Heavy.

POLL PREDICAMENT: Not-very-levelheaded Poles are blaming Mr. Walesa for the Tyminski embarrassment, because he (Mr. Walesa) precipitated the split in the Solidarity political movement and then proceeded to suggest that the transition to a market economy could be made without pain, thus creating the precedent for Mr. Tyminski's more audacious demagoguery. But the Poles should also blame themselves for choosing presidential over parliamentary democracy. In Poland's personalist political atmosphere (apparently the Communist Party discredited not only communism but also parties), Mr. Tyminski was able to run, and run strongly, on nothing but chutzpah, television, and a fat bank account. Under a parliamentary dispensation he would have had to put together a credible slate and a national organization—a minimal test of political seriousness he would almost certainly have flunked.

THE CHINA SHOP: Maintaining the international

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coalition against Iraq is an obvious need of the moment, but President Bush seems to be exploiting it for the purpose of coddling the Chinese Communists. Recall a bit of recent history: the president declined to punish the butchers of Tiananmen Square. Then he renewed China's most-favored-nation status over objections in Congress. Next he vetoed a bill to give Chinese students permission to remain in the United States. Now, just as the Chinese government is putting the student leaders of last year's demonstrations on trial, Mr. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker meet with Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, who tells reporters afterward that relations between his country and ours are improving. Even more outrageous is the behavior of the U.S. ambassador to China (and Bush's close personal friend), James Lilley, who, according to an AP report, engaged in a shouting match with human rights demonstrators before giving a speech in Seattle. When the protesters chanted, "Remember Tiananmen Square," Mr. Lilley called them "cowards" and told one Tibetan man to "go back to China."

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD: The practice of bulldozing shantytowns occasions much outcry in the West, and rightly so, when the men driving the tractors are white South Africans. When they are black Africans, however, the protests from the same quarters are largely inaudible. On December 1 the government of Kenya flattened the Nairobi shack settlement of Kibagare, leaving some 30,000 people homeless. So far there hasn't been a peep about it from TransAfrica or like-minded groups. The brutality of Daniel arap Moi's one-party regime still falls somewhere short of Mengistu's Ethiopia, Bokassa's Central African Republic, and Amin's Uganda. Let us hope Moi will not have to earn a place in the African repression hall of fame before voices in the West rise to criticize him. ●

The shock of the Newt.

HOUSE AFIRE

By Sidney Blumenthal

The tides of American politics are reflected in the hydraulics of power. But the conservative upsurge that was supposed to be the first wave of a national realignment has not flowed into the most representative body of the national government; on the contrary, it has steadily ebbed from it. Since 1980 the House Republicans have lost seats in sixty-four districts; if they had held them all, they would now be the majority, with ten seats to spare. Republicans have not commanded the House since 1954, and elaborate strategies over the past decade to win it back have met only with dismal failure. Every Republican member of the House can look as far as his ambition will permit and see nothing but a wall. After three consecutive GOP presidential landslides, their decline has put them at a level comparable to only four other troughs in GOP House strength in the twentieth century: at the heights of the New Deal and the Great Society, and in the aftermaths of the Watergate scandal and the deep recession of the early 1980s.

Meanwhile, the Democrats are mounting the third-largest opposition to a president in U.S. history. Most of the 102nd Congress—222 members—did not serve in the first Congress under Reagan and are not imbued with the glimmering notion of conservative inevitability. If there has been an anti-incumbent movement, it has drastically undermined the Republicans. In the redistricting to follow the 1990 census, the Democrats are dominant, especially after capturing the governorships of Florida and Texas. It is highly unlikely that the House GOP will have any chance of becoming a majority before the new millennium. The No. 1 item on their legislative agenda—a demand for term limits—is a sign of the exhaustion of every other political strategy and the only direct mail appeal that is drawing dollars from their disillusioned donor base. "Welcome to the world of frustration," sighs Representative Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin.

The House Republicans have spewed threats and demands over the years at many Democratic leaders they have demonized. Now their target is the Republican president who, because of their impotence, has been deprived of an instrument by which to govern effectively. George Bush's predicament is partly of his own making, due to his lack of coattails—"none whatsoever," says a top GOP campaign official about Bush's potential beneficial impact in the future. Because the House Republicans have no legislative power, their talk of a "New Paradigm"—the title of a conservative manifesto promulgated by White House assistant James Pinkerton, whose vague, reiterative rhetoric has been ridiculed as "neo-neoism" by the budget director, Richard Darman—necessarily remains on a purely hypothetical plane. The mock discussion about substance is a veil covering a desperate rear-guard grab for power by the already retreating House Republicans and their allies in the conservative movement.

The inescapable facts of checks and balances remain grim. Even if Bush were to devise a semblance of a program, he would have little chance of enacting it. His structural weakness in Washington leaves him with only two stark options: to define his presidency by bipartisan deal-making, which infuriates many of the House Republicans; or, like the last GOP president who lost the White House, to wield the veto—the club of negativity.

Bush is always in danger of being pulled under by the weight of the House Republicans shackled to his right

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ankle. And the Republican setback in the midterm elections left him bobbing for breath. In addition to the loss of nine House seats, Newt Gingrich, the GOP whip and tribune of the Republican right, retained his by a razor-thin margin, about 1,000 votes. Gingrich's much-touted strategy of realignment was to combine ideological zealotry with total political war against Democrats by any means necessary—"mindless cannibalism," according to Jim Wright, his most notable scalp.

Gingrich's principal conceit was that, though the Republicans were a scorned minority in the House, his views were shared by a majority in the country. His near-death experience has not dimmed his intensity. Nor has it prompted the slightest rethinking. "The message was what saved me," he claims. Indeed, Gingrich has been further inspired to insist on control of the direction of Bush's presidency. In a tone that is half non-negotiable demand, half plea for mercy, Gingrich says that Bush must "accept that the House Republicans are a legitimate force in politics" and that he must also accept, therefore, Gingrich's "reform agenda." Darman, according to Gingrich, must "be prepared to accept the 'New Paradigm,' " or be fired. In an unintentional parody of the president's ultimatum to Saddam Hussein, Gingrich adds: "I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt for the next several weeks."

The House Republicans, however, are hardly massed in iron columns behind Gingrich. For the past weeks, since their rout in the elections, they have been consumed with internal warfare in which Gingrich himself suffered a grievous wound. The techniques previously used against the partisan foe were deployed by Republican against Republican, forcing to the surface some of the causes of the House GOP's downward spiral.

Two posts within the GOP hierarchy were at stake in the caucus balloting on December 3: the chairmanship of the National Republican Congressional Committee, the campaign vehicle, and that of the House Republican Conference, the caucus itself. In the first race, Don Sundquist of Tennessee challenged Guy Vander Jagt of Michigan, who has held his position since 1976—a contest devoid of significant ideological difference. But Sundquist, in mimicry of Gingrich's tactics against Wright, unearthed figures that apparently showed the NRCC to be run on self-dealing principles not unlike those that animated the Silverado Savings and Loan Association. Since Vander Jagt gained control of the NRCC, it has raised almost $300 million. In 1990 it took in $28.5 million and borrowed an additional $3 million, but delivered only $2.2 million in cash and services to candidates. By contrast, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee raised $8.3 million—three-and-a-half times less than the GOP—and funneled $2.3 million to its candidates, more than the Republicans.

Where did the money go? The finance director, Wyatt Stewart, finally admitted that he has received

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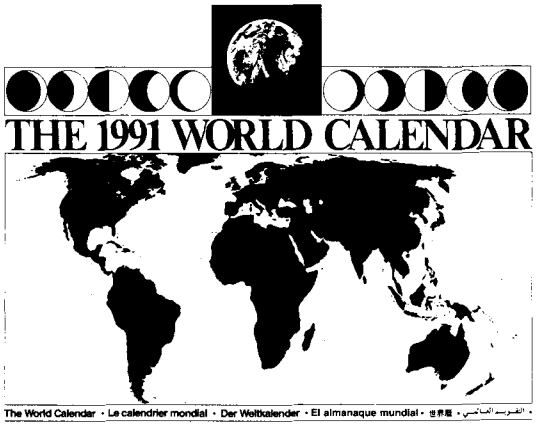
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1.4 percent of the take for fifteen years. Reports filed with the Federal Election Commission showed that dozens of Republican political consultants have been kept on lucrative retainers totaling $3.1 million this year alone—more than the candidates received. Whether Republicans won or lost, they received their fees: in 1990 Joe Gaylord, the former RNCC director, collected $104,850; Steve Winchell, the direct mail consultant, $547,488; Eddie Mahe, the operative orchestrating the term limits effort, $64,600; Larry McCarthy, the former Roger Ailes partner who produced the infamous Willie Horton spot in 1988, $81,000. (The DCCC, by the way, has no consultants on retainer.) Thus the NRCC presents an exemplary tale of Reaganism in practice: the promise of power, the dispersal of vast sums to a favored few, the budgetary embarrassment. In this case, it is the Republican candidates who have been the fleeced lambs.

Even so, the status quo was upheld by the House GOP: Vander Jagt, supported by Gingrich, easily vanquished Sundquist, who was considered too sharply negative against a fellow Republican (Vander Jagt compared his attacks to Saddam Hussein's) and who, worse, was rumored to be too closely supported behind the scenes by the despised and feared White House chief of staff, John Sununu.

In the second race, Jerry Lewis of California was challenged by Carl Pursell of Michigan—a contest of confused ideologies, with the pro-choice, pro-gun control Pursell to the left of Lewis on the social issues but championed by Gingrich and his Conservative Opportunity Society group. (It was telling of the dissipating strength of the COS that Charles Douglas of New Hampshire, already chosen to be its next head, was defeated in the midterm.) The Lewis-Pursell match was essentially a shrouded referendum on George Bush, prompted by his betrayal of his lip-reading pledge on taxes. When Bush removed the floor on which the GOP candidates had planned to build their campaigns, Lewis loyally backed his president. Now the right wanted revenge. "We're not getting any respect from the White House," said a conservative Republican congressman who supported Pursell. "Bush is a bitter disappointment." But there was another subtext too. When Minority Leader Bob Michel retires as anticipated in 1992, the leading contenders to succeed him are thought to be Lewis and Gingrich. Because the race for the conference leadership had the aspect of a rehearsal for the succession struggle, Lewis's decisive victory did more to tarnish Gingrich in the eyes of his Republican colleagues than even his close call in his district. "Newt dodged the ethics committee bullet and the re-election bullet. This time he got nicked," says a House Republican source. Within the powerless caucus, the grappling for position has overwhelmed the airy talk of a "New Paradigm."

But more is revealed in this scene than the slippage of a paladin of conservatism down the greasy pole. With the election of Reagan the Republicans had come to believe that control of the whole government was within their grasp. In 1981 the coalition of Republicans and Southern conservatives, initially forged in 1938 to thwart the New Deal and broken by Lyndon Johnson to usher in the Great Society, was born again. This highly vaunted ideological majority, nourished by pork barrel, triumphed in the passage of the Reagan-sponsored budget and tax bills.

Then the recession of 1982 brought down the fire curtain. After Reagan's re-election, his inability to sustain his fragile coalition around the issue of contra aid was the prelude to the near-collapse of his presidency in the Iran-contra scandal. Reagan's early triumphs had mesmerized the House Republicans with the illusion that their ingrained minoritarian habits of mind were truly majoritarian. Their impotence during a Republican presidential era doubled their rage. But the brief alliance with the Southern Boll Weevils, who came to see no advantages in it, came unstuck; the conversion of Democratic Representative Phil Gramm into Republican Senator Phil Gramm is the only surviving remnant. Every effort the GOP made to win the House by trying to Reaganize local campaigns (on the assumption that Reagan's election was ideological and that it could be replicated in 435 districts) only seemed to deepen the slide. The seats of the two congressional turncoats of the Bush era, Bill Grant of Florida and Tommy Robinson of Arkansas, were filled by Democrats in the 1990 elections.

George Bush, one recalls, was elected to the House in a year of fabulous GOP gains from a Sun Belt state of growing Republican strength, but he never envisaged his future within the institution. (The two GOP House whips who preceded Gingrich, Senator Trent Lott and Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, both presumptive heirs to Michel's leadership and, theoretically, the speakership, fled at the first opportunities. Their eager departures offer a bleak commentary on the House Republican prospect.) From the beginning the president has understood the frailty of the atrophied GOP base within Congress. With the unmistakable signs of a recession multiplying by mid-summer—portents of further GOP defeats—he struck what he considered a fairly good deal with the Democratic leaders. But the Gingrich-led revolt obliterated his position and dramatically shifted the momentum to the House Democratic caucus. "We have a minimal high regard for the gentleman, but we could not have made the breakthrough on the tax issue this time without Newt Gingrich. Democrats are rooting for him," says Representative David Obey, who played an important role in getting the Democrats to seize the legislative initiative for the first time in a decade. It is something they will not easily relinquish in the 102nd Congress, where they are just twenty votes shy of a veto override.

In retrospect, the narrow limits of the Bush presidency derive in large part from Reagan's greatest legislative success. The paralysis of 1991 was induced in 1981. Bush cannot have any reasonable expectation that in

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his term he will be able to forge a congressional coalition like the one that helped Reagan create the rock of insolvency and the hard place of taxes. Bush's alternatives are either the deadlock or the deal. "I think it's technically impossible to govern the country against the base of your own party," warns Gingrich. After the 1990 midterm, however, the disconnection between the efficacy of Bush's governing and his favorability ratings is greater than ever. "It's reminiscent of the mid-Carter administration," says a House Republican source. Not even the most grandiose foreign policy triumph can resolve or long obscure the president's agony at home. The giddy moment a decade ago that lent credence to the idea of a Republican realignment has made virtually impossible its fulfillment today. Ask Newt for whom the bell tolls. ●

MEXICO POSTCARD

DEAD BABIES

By David Schrieberg

MEXICO CITY

Shortly after arriving here last year I began to notice a scattering of bizarre stories in the respectable press. It was reported that Mexican children routinely were being kidnapped, spirited across the U.S. border, and murdered for their vital organs, which were then transplanted into sick American children with rich parents.

To my surprise, the story, far from being quickly discredited and dropped, kept popping up in new guises. One mother told me that in the rural state of Hidalgo her daughters' schoolteachers warn parents to take better care of their children or they could end up in pieces across the border. I also heard of the traveling salesman who boarded a bus with a leaky suitcase. When a suspicious bus driver opened it, he found it full of children's eyes and kidneys, wrapped in plastic and chilled with melting ice. In the past few months the stories in the papers have increased in regularity and drama: "Undocumented Children, Victims of Those who Traffic in Organs" (from *Excelsior*, Mexico's most influential newspaper); "20,000 Kidnapped Each Year in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez" (from Prensa Latina, the Cuban wire service); and "Traffic in Human Organs Probable Cause of Kidnappings" (from the left-leaning *La Jornada* in Mexico City).

The rumor, of course, isn't true. "There has not been one concrete, objective, realistic case of a child stolen from a family for his organs," says Gerardo Perdomo Cueto, director of the Office of Family Affairs here, who adds that he's been hearing the stories for nearly two years. Both the Mexican and the U.S. governments have tried to dispel the fear, but no one seems to want to believe the truth. Mothers clutch their children tightly to their sides in public places. Schools take extra care to lock their doors. One popular Mexico City radio call-in program dealing with the rumor recently found its lines jammed as 100 callers besieged the switchboard for information.

Mexico is not the only country to feed the rumor. The dead babies story has been traveling the globe for almost four years. Regional versions have materialized in at least fifty countries. It perseveres through a remarkable mixture of unwitting misinformation, deliberate disinformation, superstition, and plain old rumor-mongering. Millions of educated and uneducated people—particularly in Latin America—firmly believe that the United States has created, in essence, an international network of child murderers, backed by gruesome teams of medical butchers. In the past couple of months Todd Leventhal, disinformation policy officer for the U.S. Information Agency, fielded calls from a television network in Denmark, an adoption agency in Canada, and the *Daily Mail* of London. What did he know, he was asked again and again, about reports that foreign babies were being butchered in the United States for their lungs, kidneys, hearts, and livers?

Ever since Christians first accused Jews of killing their children and drinking the blood in Passover ceremonies, the story of one group murdering the children of another has been a favorite of hate-mongers. This form of the story, with the United States as the villain, seems to have first surfaced in 1987 in the Honduran press, courtesy of Leonardo Villeda Bermúdez, former secretary general of the Honduran Committee for Social Welfare. Although U.S. officials say that Villeda later claimed he had been misquoted and was only talking about unconfirmed reports he had heard, the damage was done. Guatemalan papers carried similar stories, which made their way across the Atlantic and were circulated by children's rights groups in Europe.

At that point, U.S. officials say, the Soviet Union began pushing the story, promoting it in Soviet and East-bloc newspapers and magazines, as well as in Communist Party media outlets around the world. That kind of disinformation campaign was old hat for the Soviets, who used to spread stories that the American military created the AIDS virus and is working on an "ethnic weapon" to kill non-whites. Such campaigns have, of course, died down considerably, but the baby-parts campaign flourished.

In August 1988, for example, a judge in Paraguay announced that seven Paraguayan children had been kidnapped, killed, and smuggled to the United States so that their vital organs could be transplanted into the ailing children of rich Americans. The Reuters wire service stringer in Asunción, on his way out the door to a wedding, asked his assistant to get a comment on the allegation from American officials. But it was Sunday,

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and nobody was answering the phone at the U.S. Embassy. The assistant reported back to the correspondent that he could get no comment. In his dispatch, the stringer reported that the embassy refused to comment on the allegation. By Monday the story had again gone around the world, appearing in some of Europe's most prestigious papers—including *The Times* of London. On September 15 the European Parliament passed a resolution against trafficking in children's organs.

As the story took on a life of its own, the U.S. government began to react. U.S. embassies and consulates from Rabat to Lima monitored the local press and responded in detail to stories and editorials condemning the alleged practice. The FBI conducted an investigation. Then U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, the U.S. Public Health Service, the FBI, and other U.S. officials put out statements and held press conferences denouncing the rumors. "Based on a review of all information available to the FBI," the agency announced the week after the European resolution, "these charges are completely unfounded."

Most frustrating to those trying to defeat the story is a simple fact: illegal organ-harvesting is impossible. An organ transplant is a sophisticated operation, both in the extraction and transplant phases. Under American law, every patient awaiting a transplant and every organ available for transplant is strictly tracked by computer through the United Network for Organ Sharing, based in Richmond, Virginia. Organs also have to be carefully matched to recipients to limit the risk of rejection. And they have extremely short shelf-life: a heart is good for four hours, a liver for twelve, a kidney for forty-eight. "You cannot just butcher these babies, store them in a freezer, and take their organs out when necessary," says Kelle Straw, spokeswoman for the organ network.

Time and again, the sources have been tracked down and were unable to substantiate the charges. Rosa Maria Armendáriz, the secretary of education for Mexico's leading farm workers organization, had been quoted as "confirming" and having "proof" that in the United States, "children are robbed of different organs through surgical procedure for later transplants to other persons." In a recent interview Armendáriz tried to convince me that the Mexican children were losing their vital parts, but she admitted she has no proof.

Another widely quoted source in Mexico, Victor Carlos García Moreno, a professor at the National Autonomous University's law school, was reported to have given detailed information to the press. "The illegal market in developed countries, especially the United States," several newspapers quoted him as saying, "is demanding human organs of various kinds: eyes, kidneys, hearts, lungs, livers, healthy blood. The prices of each organ reach as high as $75,000." Angry U.S. Embassy officials pressed him, and he denied making the statements. He told me that although he believes that Mexican children are illegally sold for adoption in other countries—an assertion not denied by U.S. officials—he knows of no cases of organ theft. But he couldn't bring himself to let the story go. "I do not confirm it, but I do not deny it." Apparently for much of the press in Mexico and many other countries, that's sufficient evidence.

DAVID SCHRIEBERG is Mexico bureau chief for *The Sacramento Bee.*

To bomb or not to bomb?

HAMLET IN KUWAIT

By Elie Kedourie

The November 29 resolution of the United Nations Security Council on the Persian Gulf crisis is the twelfth in a series that began with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2. Like its predecessors, it invites the crisis to continue to unfold in slow motion—to what conclusion none can say. The resolution seemed to indicate a clear and categorical line of action, but the next day the president suggested yet further discussions with the invader, thus leaving things up in the air. We, the spectators of this particular play, can only observe and wait to see how and when the Hamlet of the Kuwait affair will nerve himself to a decision.

The play raises a variety of questions about the manner in which the principal actor has chosen to interpret his role. The identity of this actor cannot be in doubt: if Iraq has precipitated the conflict, it is the United States that bears the burden of coping with it. How has Bush chosen to deal with this sudden and, by the admission of his highest officials, unexpected contingency? From the very start the United States has chosen to involve the U.N. in the issue, and it has continued to do so in its public diplomacy.

The U.N. is the heir of the League of Nations. When it began, the League was hailed as the foundation of a new and pacific world order. It proved to be a miserable failure. It lasted barely twenty years, and had stopped functioning in any real sense five years before that. This dismal record placed a question mark against the idea of a world organization as the guarantor of international order, or as a specific deterring the outbreak of a catastrophic war like that of 1914-18. Most conspicuously, the League failed to prevent the even more catastrophic war of 1939-45.

The rationale underlying the U.N. is exactly the same as that which underlay the League. Since 1945 experience has shown that the U.N. is no more efficacious than its predecessor in preserving peace. To the

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extent that peace has been preserved, it has been through a balance of terror between the two superpowers. Now, it is said, a new day will dawn for the U.N. However, the effectiveness of the U.N. still depends on good relations between the superpowers, which the U.N. is powerless to establish (or prevent), and the U.N. thus remains the fifth wheel on the coach. Peace depends on the decisions of the superpowers and their allies, and on a balance of power that both sides accept and neither seeks to undermine. Should this change, then the existence or non-existence of the U.N. won't make much difference.

A question mark also lies against the U.N. as an organization—as it did not lie against its predecessor. Its bureaucracy is unwieldy, hidebound, and quota-ridden, and its three last secretaries-general were not men who could be entrusted with the awesome responsibility of standing guard over a new world order. Dag Hammarskjöld was a megalomaniacal visionary, U Thant a dim bureaucrat's bureaucrat, and Kurt Waldheim an emanation of the most sinister period of European history. Yet this bizarre trinity was all that the movers and shakers of this world could find to offer to a trusting humanity.

The resolutions passed by the Security Council are said to express the condemnation of Iraqi actions by the world community. The Security Council, however, is not the Parliament of Man, or the highest court of justice in the world. It is a variable collection of states, each with its own particular interests and its own calculations, registering its vote exclusively in light of these calculations. There is thus a wide and uncomfortable gap between the reality and the rhetoric—a gap in which a ruinous hypocrisy lodges. To attempt to deal with this conflict by means of resolutions is to disguise political disagreements as legal disputes. These resolutions, however numerous and draconian, would, as they say in Arabic, remain simply ink on paper, were it not for the stupendous military expedition this country has sent to the Gulf. The consequence of speaking as though this expedition is simply the executant of U.N. decrees is to allow those who have ventured neither blood nor treasure in the cause to claim the right to offer advice and to bestow (or deny) a strictly gratuitous approval.

There is also a good deal of talk about coalitions and alliances. It is, however, amply clear that what really exists is a collection of states among whom there are vague and ephemeral understandings. These states are not in any sense committed to engage together in armed hostilities, or to act in concert in diplomatic negotiations. The president's sudden offer of talks with Iraq, done without any consultation with presumed partners, is indicative enough of the situation. The use of these terms here is thus misconceived, and the misconception could create serious difficulties in the management of the conflict, and in the settlement that will follow. In brief, since speech is the only currency available to us in articulating our interests and conveying them to other parties, a dangerous confusion is likely to ensue if our ideas lack definition, or if the rhetoric does not match the reality.

Furthermore, we now know less than ever exactly what state of affairs the administration envisages as a satisfactory outcome of the quarrel with Iraq. There has been tough, uncompromising talk that ends in a dying fall. There have been vague references to some regional structure said to prevent anything like the invasion of Kuwait in the future. It is, however, very difficult to discern the elements in the region that could combine to create a stable structure of any kind. Ever since the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the departure from the Middle East of what used to be considered Great Powers, no evidence has emerged to show that any kind of regional stability is possible. There was the Arab League after 1945, a regional organization in U.N.-speak; but its record has been one of bitter rivalry and conflict between its members, and it now seems to be irremediably split. There has been the Baghdad Pact and its successor, the Central Treaty Organization—bywords for ineffectiveness. Until 1971 there was the British presence in the Gulf, and the network of treaties with the rulers of the Trucial Coast. This has now gone, to be replaced, for a very short while, by a kind of balance between Iraq and Iran that supplied a very fragile stability. The Iran-Iraq war, with its U.S.-willed outcome, destroyed this balance. The consequence was the invasion and devastation of Kuwait. What sense, then, in speaking now of a regional structure, except to allow sage diplomats to fill their golden years with happy pontification?

As a superpower, the United States has vital interests in the Middle East. One has always been to prevent Soviet hegemony over the area, and this has not disappeared with the end of the cold war. The Soviet Union—or, if it should break up, Russia—will still be there, next door, and in the best of circumstances will remain a formidable military power, more than a match for its neighbors, singly or collectively. Another vital interest is to prevent any attempt by a local power to establish hegemony over its neighbors. An attempt at hegemony was made by Nasser in the decade between Suez and the Six-Day War, and it is now being repeated by Iraq. In both cases, ironically enough, the attempt was initially facilitated by U.S. action: in Nasser's case by President Eisenhower's policy in the Suez War, and in Saddam Hussein's by the so-called tilt toward Iraq during its war with Iran, and afterward to the very eve of the invasion of Kuwait.

The United States also has a strategic interest in an uninterrupted supply of oil at a reasonable price. Repeatedly since 1973, locally induced emergencies have threatened to cut that supply: the embargo of 1973-74, the panic of 1979, the mutual destruction of pipelines and refineries by Iraq and Iran in the opening stages of their war, the attacks against tankers on the high seas from about 1985, mainly by Iraq, and now the Kuwait

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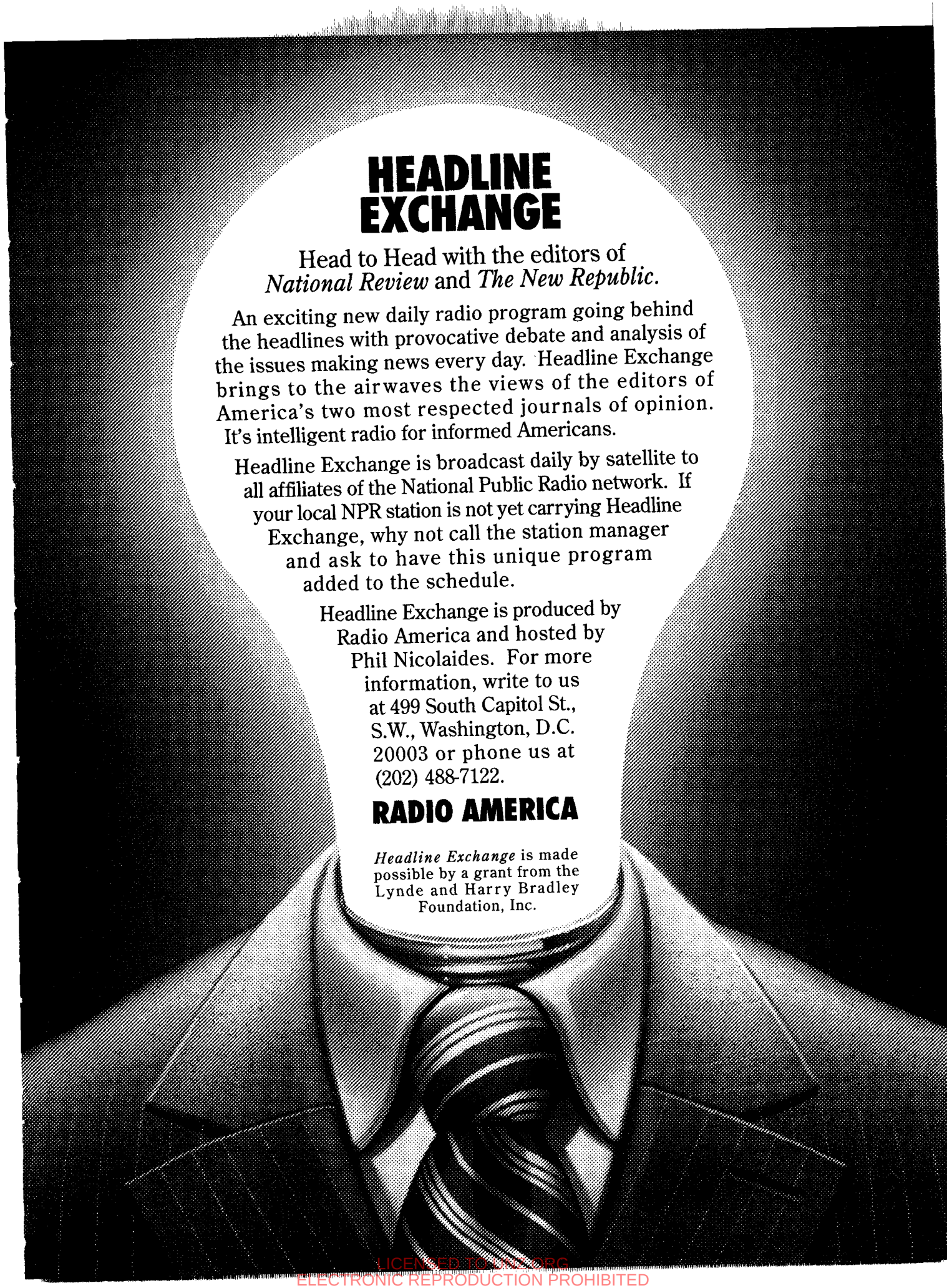
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invasion. Given the endemic instability of the area, the lack of a local balance of power, and the many potential conflicts between various states, there is no reason to believe that the settlement of the Kuwait affair would bring to an end this series of emergencies that have periodically wreaked financial and industrial havoc in the West.

The supply of oil has to be made secure, and its price has to be reasonable. OPEC has created the most colossal market-rigging known to history. The exorbitant gains and the profiteering derived from this scheme have themselves made possible the most destructive instability in the Middle East. We should see the Iran-Iraq war, and now the invasion of Kuwait, in terms of a morality tale in which greed has swiftly brought retribution in the shape of enormous casualties and great devastation. To these horrors that OPEC money made possible we have to add the long-drawn-out civil war in Lebanon, which, but for this money, would have died of financial anemia.

It will be asked whether preventing a local hegemony and ensuring a secure supply of oil at a reasonable price are really the only two strategic interests of the United States in the Middle East. What about the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has been at the forefront in the concerns of successive administrations, and which now, through "linkage," however much it is resisted, may be made to bury the Kuwait issue? One would have to say that, in spite of the tremendous preoccupation with it in all quarters, it is not a strategic U.S. interest to seek actively to settle the conflict between Israel and its neighbors.

The conflict, which has now lasted more than four decades, is many-sided. The very number of parties involved and the incompatibility of their interests foil all attempts by outsiders to broker a settlement. A broker can be of use only where the parties are themselves willing: the settlement between Israel and Egypt—which involved relatively straightforward issues—became possible only when Sadat and Begin showed willingness, to the surprise of the Carter administration, which had entirely different plans. Settlement of such a complex dispute will be sure to leave some parties dissatisfied, and the broker may even suffer a penalty.

In any event, a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict will have little bearing on other, more critical, issues in the Middle East. A case in point is the downfall of the Shah in 1978-79, which dealt a very heavy blow to U.S. interests. The rise of Khomeini and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war led in turn to the invasion of Kuwait. Yet none of this had anything to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is ironic that Iran began to unravel when the Carter administration was absorbed in smoothing over tiffs between Begin and Sadat. In the same way this administration was bickering with Shamir when Saddam Hussein was preparing his little surprise in Kuwait.

ELIE KEDOURIE is emeritus professor of politics at the University of London.

The massacres at Kocevje.

BARE BONES

By Nikolai Tolstoy

OXFORD

In April 1986 I published a book in Britain called *The Minister and the Massacres.* The "Minister" was Harold Macmillan and the "massacres" were those of thousands of Yugoslavian soldiers, militia, and civilians who had fled Marshal Tito's advancing armies in May 1945, surrendered to the British occupation forces in Austria, and were returned to Tito by the British under Macmillan's orders. My account of the massacres was largely based on the testimony of the three survivors who had escaped and eventually built new lives for themselves in the free world. British troops had told them—"on the word of a British officer"—that they were going to join their comrades and families in camps in Italy. Instead the British crammed them into cattle trucks and dispatched them through the railway tunnel under the mountains and into Yugoslavia.

What followed was as ghastly as any of the horrors perpetrated during World War II, though at the time of these operations the war was comfortably over. Unloaded at the little provincial town of Kocevje, south of the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, by Tito's Partisans, the prisoners were stripped, wired together by the wrists in pairs, and conveyed eastward in trucks through the pine forest. About half an hour's drive from the town, successive convoys halted and the prisoners were taken to the edge of a natural chasm in the mountainside.

There they were tortured, shot, and flung into the great pit. The procedure continued for about three weeks, until this and similar mass graves in the vicinity were filled with thousands of bodies, the handful of living slowly suffocating and starving beneath the decomposing dead. The survivors I interviewed had miraculously dragged themselves after dark up a tree trunk that had been dislodged when the Partisans began sealing the mouth of the pit with dynamite explosions.

This past April I visited the site of the mass grave for the first time. Though Slovenia was on the eve of its first free elections since 1945, my journey was very much in the tradition of cold war thrillers. Accompanied by a young deputy from the Christian Democratic Party, I surreptitiously changed cars at a country priest's house. Then we were guided to another priest, who led us along forest tracks

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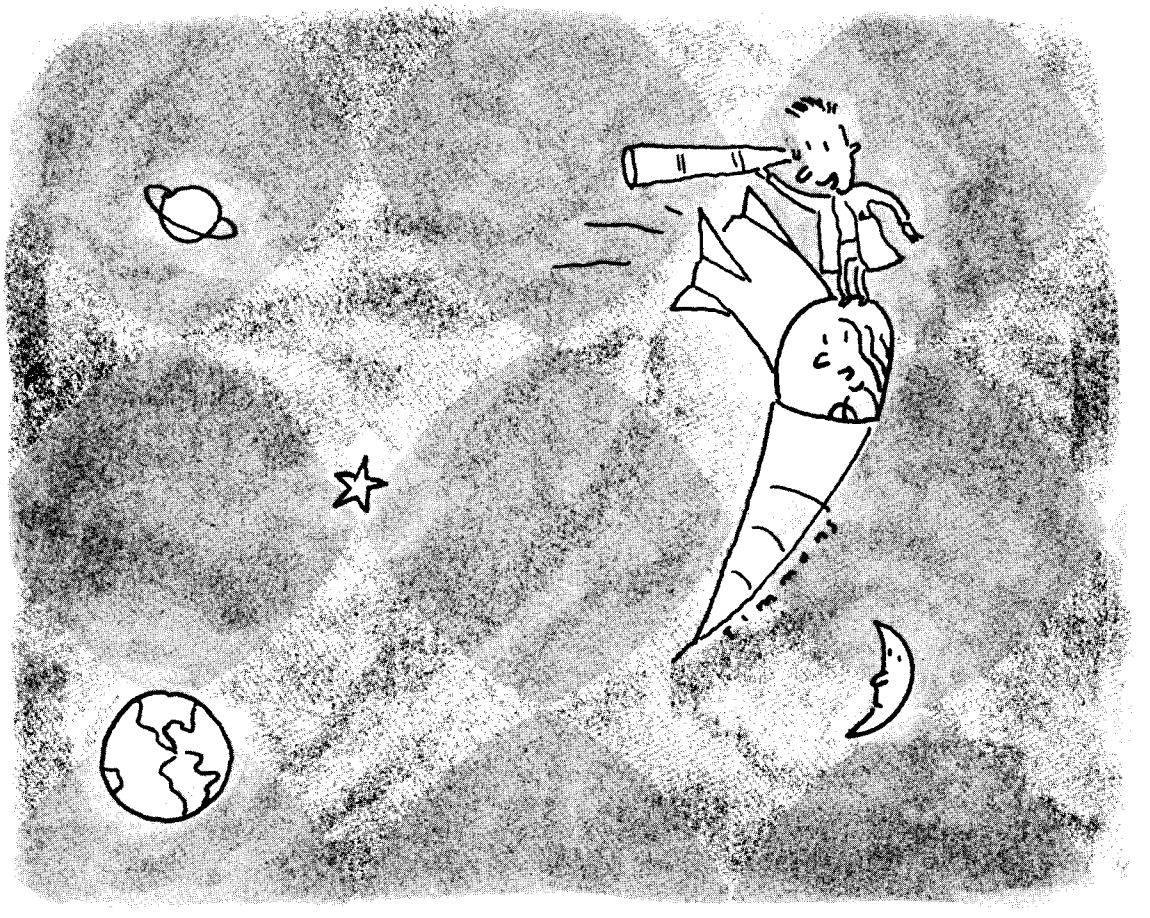

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until we reached the dreadful clearing.

A little unexpectedly, everything was much as I had envisaged. The forest was very still. I seemed to hear the shrieks and groans evoked by the accounts of the survivors: Milan Zajec, Frank Dejak, Frank Kozina. Some of the trees bore rough crucifixes, carved in the bark in later years by relatives of the slain. The pit itself was as grim as I had pictured it. Scrambling to the bottom, I peered down into the dark crevice in which lie entombed the bones of thousands. Under the rock shelf I could see a skeleton, still in a crouch.

Soon after my return home, the Yugoslavian elections occurred and the climate of opinion there radically changed. Despite the continuing menace of an active Communist Party, Slovenia is now a democratic state. There are no longer any serious restrictions on speaking openly about past crimes and tragedies, and on July 8 the archbishop of Ljubljana presided over a requiem mass at the Pit of Kocevje, attended by the president of Slovenia, Milan Kucan, and some 30,000 people.

The Kocevje massacre was only a part of the terror unleashed by Tito in order to establish his personal rule at war's end. All over Slovenia and Croatia mass graves continue to be unearthed. A study published last year in Zagreb estimates that about 70,000 "enemies of the people" were liquidated in similar massacres. More than a third of them were delivered up by the British in Austria, who for the most part were well aware that their victims were (in the words of a Partisan officer) "en route for the slaughterhouse." (Another 6,000 Slovenian civilians in British hands were saved due to protests from the Red Cross and the Canadian commandant, Major Paul Barre.)

Tito and his sympathizers abroad justified or obscured the extent of the terror by claiming the killings represented acts of vengeance against the Fascist Ustashe, the pro-Axis Croatian equivalent of the SS, whose atrocities, perpetrated against minority Serbs in Croatia, Jews, and Gypsies, were notorious during the war. But at least as far as the slaughter at Kocevje was concerned, only a handful of those killed had been part of the Ustashe. The majority of the people the British forced back from Austria, former Yugoslav Politburo member Milovan Djilas explained in a 1979 interview, were simple peasants in uniform: "They had no murders on their hands. Their only crime was fear of communism and the reputation of the Communists. Their sole motivation for leaving the country was panic." Although the soldiers killed belonged to military and paramilitary formations that had been fighting the Communists, they were disarmed and helpless when Tito regained control of them. Some may have been war criminals or so inveterately hostile to the regime as to represent a perceived threat, but the widespread killing of women, children, and civilians suggests a broader motive: any prospect of resistance to the totalitarian regime had to be crushed.

Earlier this year in Belgrade I interviewed Simo Dubajic, the Yugoslav army officer who presided over the massacres at Kocevje. After assisting at negotiations for the handovers with the British in Austria in May 1945, he returned to Ljubljana and was informed that he must proceed to Kocevje to supervise the liquidation of all the returning Yugoslavs. The next day Tito delivered a public address in Ljubljana. By this time British delivery of the fugitives had already been proceeding for a week, and the Marshal declared: "As for the traitors who appeared in our country . . . the long arm of justice, the arm of retribution by our people, has already reached the vast majority, and only a few of them have managed to escape and reach their protectors outside the country. This handful of fugitives will never see our lovely mountains, our flowering meadows again . . . anyone who would dare violate this all-Yugoslav patriotism will be pitted against a granite rock, and not only bloody his nose but bash his skull."

Even as Tito was speaking, Dubajic had begun his assignment at Kocevje. "I was sitting down there throughout that time," he told me, "in front of an inn, receiving reports and drinking Bakarska Vodica [a brand of champagne]. I was dead drunk, but I don't exclude the possibility that it was I who gave the order at the end to throw explosives into the caverns after the prisoners were shot, in order to prevent anyone from eventually getting out.

"I don't know whether our men at Kocevje were sober while they were shooting the prisoners. But when they came back down from the caverns, they went mad. Utterly! They turned to me, and to others, saying, 'Mummy, I am hungry, I want something to drink, I want to eat!' Horrible things. We had to send them right away to receive medical treatment. A kind of Partisan epilepsy took hold of them. After some time they sobered up, but they couldn't go back. Some of the others stayed there until the job was done."

Dubajic admits frankly that at the time, as a fanatical Communist, he fervently believed the ends justified the means. Within a few years, however, he resigned his post, left the Party, and was imprisoned for a while. Today he preaches reconciliation and a return to Christian faith.

Despite Yugoslavia's overwhelming political and economic problems, and though tensions between the nationalities are dangerously sharp, there exists a widespread feeling that what is needed is to come to terms with the past. Official committees have been established in Slovenia and Croatia to conduct investigations into war crimes. There is a paramount need to respect the memory of the obliterated victims. The mass graves will become shrines and places of pilgrimage, mute reminders of a historical tragedy and of the dangers inherent in brutality sanctioned by ideology. No longer will history be edited to conceal the regime's responsibility for crimes beyond most people's imagining.

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Oddly enough, it is only in Britain that the official line continues to be perpetuated. The collaboration of the British military in Austria in Tito's planning is beyond dispute, arranged by Macmillan in violation of orders received from Allied command. On May 17, 1945, Field Marshal Harold Alexander had ordered Serbs and Slovenes held by the British Fifth Corps in Austria to be evacuated to safety in Italy. A British officer responsible for arranging the deception and handover recently described the operations as "one of the most disgraceful orders that British soldiers have ever been ordered to undertake." They served no purpose useful to British interests, and are now widely regarded here with shame and revulsion.

Not so, however, by British officialdom. Last year, following a libel action in the High Court, I was fined £1.5 million for accusing Lord Aldington, formerly chief of staff of the Fifth Corps, in a privately circulated pamphlet, of being a war criminal. The judge, who like Aldington is a member of the exclusive Rye Golf Club, sneered at the surviving victims who had traveled thousands of miles to testify as witnesses, and described a British officer who expressed revulsion at the operations in which he had unwillingly participated, the author Nigel Nicolson, as "a wet" (English slang for effete and sentimental).

The judge instructed the jury to regard me as a "useless historian, who acts on tittle-tattle from other people." Indeed, "all historians are the same, they are not always concerned with real evidence." Instructed unequivocally that "damages have to be large," the jury came up with an award reflecting His Lordship's now notorious insistence that "you do not deal in Mickey Mouse money."

Though the libel action did not concern *The Minister and the Massacres*, the book has since been unofficially banned throughout Britain. A menacing circular letter from Aldington's lawyers (and the threat of colossal damages) proved sufficient to enforce the prohibition across the country to the extent that copies held in research libraries were destroyed.

Last month an "Inquiry" into the events in Yugoslavia and into a parallel operation in which Cossack soldiers and civilians were handed over to Stalin was published. It is reported to have been unofficially sponsored by the Cabinet Office back in 1986. The "Inquiry" omitted documents unfavorable to the official interpretation, such as Field Marshal Alexander's crucial statement of August 23, 1945, that he had refused to authorize the use of force to repatriate the Cossacks. It even altered the texts of others; a sentence from Macmillan's diary was inserted into a formal report in order to obscure the fact that he had concealed his order. Its conclusion? That what occurred was purely the result of "grave operational necessity." As for the victims, thousands of whom were noncombatants, priests, women, and children: "It must be remembered that in each case the surrendered fugitives had to a greater or lesser extent served the cause of Nazi tyranny."

In June 1945 the Yugoslav Communists dynamited the mass graves in order to suppress the evidence. Senior British officers doctored reports in a similar effort to conceal their complicity. But in the end all such attempts are likely to be futile. As an Irish scribe wrote more than a thousand years ago: "For a slaughter is not usual without someone to come out of it to tell the tale."

NIKOLAI TOLSTOY writes about Russian and Celtic history.

THE PRESS

SPY'S DEMISE

By Joseph Nocera

Sometime this month, barring any last-minute glitches, Charles Saatchi, a wealthy British advertising mogul, will become the majority owner of the self-styled satirical monthly, *Spy* magazine. For this privilege he will pay $4.2 million—an extraordinary sum, given the crippled conditions of both the magazine industry, which is in a deep recession, and of *Spy* itself. Before Saatchi showed up *Spy* had been on the block for nearly a year, its prospectus passed around from one magazine owner to the next, its cash reserves dwindling, its ad pages shriveling. Amid gleeful speculation that *Spy* would soon go the way of *7 Days*, *Manhattan, Inc.*, and *Business Month*, to name just a few of the magazines that have folded in the past year, its death sentence got commuted. And therein lies a story.

The magazine industry can serve as a nice case study of the speculative excess of the 1980s. In 1980 there were around 1,500 mainstream magazines; in 1990 there were more than 3,000. All of them were intended to make money, yet they were all chasing the same basic ad markets—liquor, fashion, cars, cigarettes—none of which was growing at the same pace the industry was, and several of which weren't growing at all. For the record: most magazines make their money from advertising, not circulation. (And some, like TNR, don't make money either way.)

Not that anyone worried about such nuisances as basic economics. Like so many '80s enthusiasms, starting a magazine was glamorous, and finding investors was easy. The prices magazines fetched became wildly inflated, thanks largely to a handful of investment boutiques specializing in magazine sales (for whom higher prices, no matter how unjustified, brought larger fees).

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The loopiest example came in 1988, when Andy Warhol's estate sold *Interview* for a cool $15 million. *Interview* has never made a penny.

It was in this climate that *Spy* was hatched, in the fall of 1986. Its founding editors, Kurt Andersen and Graydon Carter, were Time Inc. refugees hoping for a chance at the big score. "They were never in this thing to provide a literary service," recalls one of *Spy*'s original limited partners. "Their goal was always to get rich." Although they had accrued a number of old-money affectations—they were terrible social snobs, for starters—Andersen and Carter were not by any means wealthy. Carter, for instance, the son of a jet pilot, had grown up in Ottawa, attended local public schools, and never finished college. He had gone to work for *Time* (and *Life*) for the same reason most people do: to make a living.

Spy's first prospectus described it as a humor magazine, but humor was never really its essence. It was from the start a nasty, edgy, almost nihilistic thing, full of contempt for the people it wrote about, filled with ad hominem attacks aimed at both the very famous (Donald and Ivana Trump) and the very obscure (mostly media people). Reviewers got "reviewed." In the fashion of aristocrats—faux or not—everywhere, *Spy*'s editors mocked the newly rich for their social pretensions. Anyone who lived outside Manhattan was scorned for living outside Manhattan. There was nothing about *Spy* that suggested any kind of moral compass guiding it—and in that, it beautifully captured the spirit of the age. It was a hit. Not financially, of course, but in every other way that mattered. It became Topic A at Manhattan parties. Every new issue was eagerly devoured by its small but growing readership. The *Spy* boys became the subject of the kinds of fawning profiles they would never publish (at least not in *Spy*; Carter did write fawning profiles for other magazines).

Andersen and Carter also had an uncanny feel for the marketplace they had entered. With so many more magazines chasing the same ads and readers, editors had become increasingly skittish—ever more fearful of offending advertisers. *Time* would run a puffy cover on Disney one week and then land a huge Disney ad insert a few weeks later. Tina Brown, editor of *Vanity Fair*, ran admiring cover stories on Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren, two of her most important advertisers. Editors were willing to give the subjects of stories the right to approve the writer and choose the photographs; implicitly the subjects were guaranteed that the stories would come out the way they wanted. *Spy*, in contrast, seemed like a breath of fresh air. It twitted the rich when almost no one else would. It seemed to blow the lid off the industry's unseemly deals and cozy compromises.

Sometime around its second birthday, *Spy* got its first feeler. It came from S. I. Newhouse, who, as the owner of the Condé Nast magazine chain, is probably the single most important person in the industry. He is surely the richest, and his interest was proof-positive of *Spy*'s heat. He told the magazine's owners—who included, in addition to Carter and Andersen, publisher Tom Phillips, son of the chairman of Raytheon, and outside investor Steven Schragis, who had put up nearly $2 million in return for somewhere around 40 percent of the stock—that he hadn't really read it much, but he kept *hearing* about it, mainly at parties. It would have been a propitious time to sell. But before the talks could get very far—before any hard numbers were tossed out—the *Spy* boys dismissed Newhouse's interest. Made giddy by their own press clips, they assumed that money would be there when they were ready to cash in.

It was a big mistake. Not long after the *Interview* sale in the summer of 1988, the magazine bubble burst, and not long after, *Spy*'s did too. Few former *Spy* staffers point to one particular incident that turned the tide; what they do remember is going to the same kinds of parties where the magazine was once so praised and finding themselves put on the defensive. *Spy* hadn't changed; something in the zeitgeist had. My own guess is that readers gradually became sensitized to the hurt *Spy* so enjoyed inflicting, especially toward targets who were too obscure to merit its attention. Picking on Donald Trump was one thing, though even that got tiresome. Picking on some anonymous midlevel *New York Times* editor who, *Spy* claimed, didn't wash his hands in the bathroom was quite another. (After the uproar over that item, *Spy* sent the man a letter of apology; typically, though, it never apologized in the pages of the magazine.) There were dozens of items of that type. "People started to see *Spy*'s nastiness as gratuitous instead of funny," recalls one former writer. Eventually, contempt bred contempt.

Soon a new kind of gossip arose about *Spy*—about the magazine's own unseemly deals and cozy compromises. About how people friendly with Carter or Andersen—like Jann Wenner, an obvious target both because of his dictatorial tendencies at *Rolling Stone* and his well-documented past fondness for drugs—seemed out of range of *Spy*'s cannon fire. About how Carter had padded his résumé. About how the magazine's editors assigned stories to exact revenge on someone they disliked. The editors, in other words, were hypocrites: not only no purer than anyone else in the industry, but in some ways worse because of their willingness to use *Spy* as a tool to further their own private agendas. Perhaps the most wounding story that made the rounds was the one alleging that Andersen had killed a deeply embarrassing item about a well-known newsweekly editor—who supposedly mixed up Reggie Jackson and Jesse Jackson during a meeting with the latter—because the man was sponsoring Andersen in New York's exclusive Century Club. (Andersen weakly explains, "I never killed an item because no one ever handed me an item to kill," though he admits he'd heard about the supposed Jackson mix-up and had chosen not to pursue it.)

Inside the magazine all was not well either. Even before the magazine downturn started, ads began to dry up. Between 1988 and 1989 *Spy* lost nearly 15 percent

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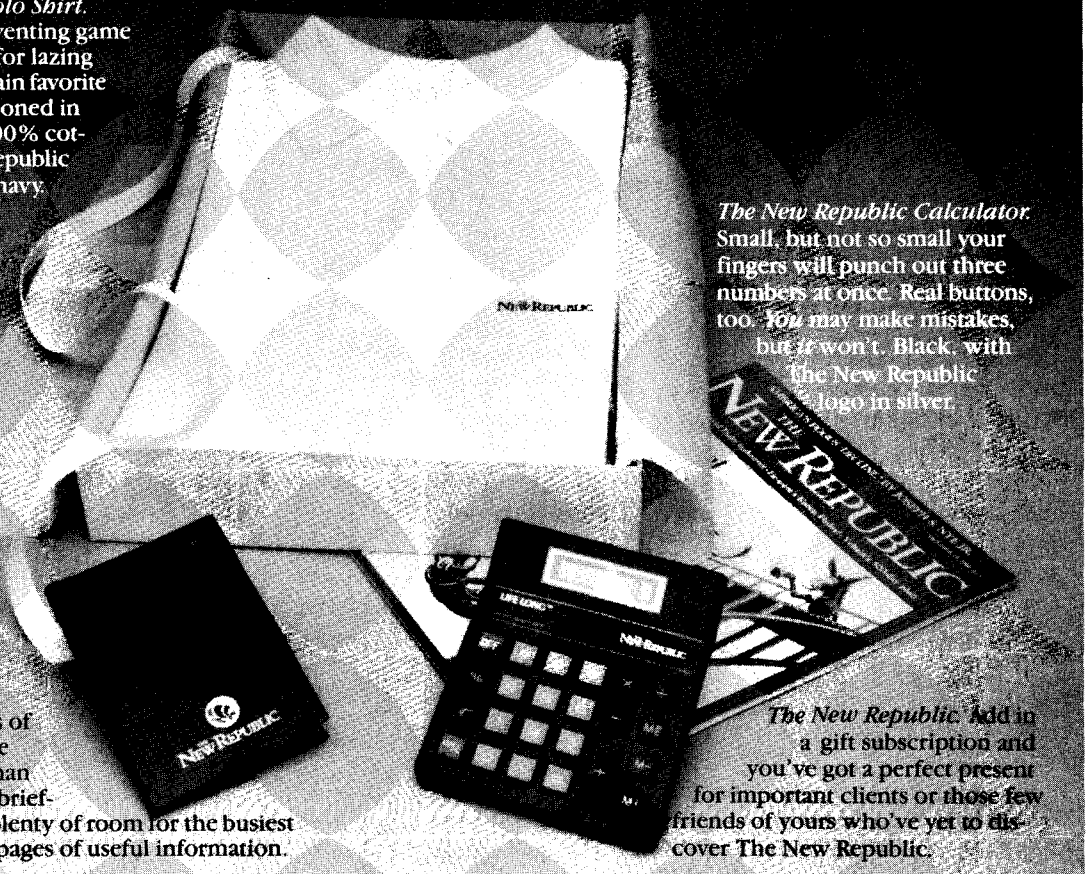

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of its ad pages. An attempt to turn *Spy* into a national publication failed badly. Phillips brought in professional ad salesmen to corral big national ad accounts; most of them, upon finding out how stiff resistance was to *Spy*, soon fled.

Writers began to trickle away too. Some left because they were tired of Carter and Andersen sticking ad hominem adjectives into their prose; others feared for their reputations if they continued to be linked to *Spy*. Several writers told me they had become uneasy with the way Carter and Andersen treated their largest investor, Schragis. Schragis, whose family owns the Doral Hotel chain, is a puppy dog of a man—"a nice guy but a classic nerd," as one friend describes him—and it was painfully obvious that he hoped some of *Spy*'s cachet would rub off on him. Instead, the other three *Spy* partners treated him with disdain, making him the butt of cruel in-house jokes they didn't even attempt to hide from him. Decency aside—a quality no one has ever associated with *Spy*—this treatment would turn out to be another big mistake.

By February 1990 the prices magazines were being sold for had virtually collapsed. Yet this is when the *Spy* boys finally decided to put theirs up for sale. There was some desperation in this move, but also the delusion that they could defy the market—that they could still get rich when no one else could because they ran the hip, hot *Spy*. Phillips told one of the limited partners that he thought the magazine could get at least $15 million—a price he based on the *Interview* deal—and internally there was feverish talk of getting as much as $40 million. Aspiring to join the ranks of the newly rich—the very people he so loved to make fun of in his magazine—Carter openly fantasized about going off to live the life of a country squire.

It was a joke. Morgan Stanley was brought in to conduct what everyone at *Spy* presumed would be an auction. They put together a book detailing *Spy*'s finances, and everyone who was anyone in the magazine industry got a look at it (after signing a ridiculous confidentiality agreement). None of them was ever a serious potential buyer; they simply wanted to have the satisfaction of knowing *Spy*'s true condition. In fact the numbers weren't that terrible: despite everything, the company had turned a $60,000 profit in 1989, the result mainly of some successful side deals—a best-selling book (*Separated At Birth*) and a TV special. It carried no debt, and had done such a resourceful job of hoarding cash that it still had close to $600,000 in the bank. In the climate that existed when S. I. Newhouse first came calling—when magazines were prospering, when *Spy* was hot—those numbers would have been considered impressive. But those days were over. Now executives focused on *Spy*'s dwindling ad pages and other problems buried in the Morgan Stanley document. Newhouse brushed off *Spy* as brusquely as *Spy* had once brushed him off. The entire industry seemed to delight in giving *Spy* the back of its hand.

By the middle of the summer the *Spy* boys knew they weren't going to get rich anytime soon. Not only was there no auction, no one had even bothered to make a bid. Phillips, when asked about the sale, tended to shrug his shoulders and explain, "There's just no capital out there." *Spy* was laying off staff by then, and its ad situation was so grim it began running fashion spreads in a pathetic attempt to create the right "environment" for fashion advertisers. Its reputation hadn't improved either. This past June, when *Spy* published an embarrassing letter that Tina Brown had written to Hollywood superagent Michael Ovitz—precisely the kind of item that had made *Spy* popular in the first place—the buzz in New York focused on the fact that Brown had criticized Carter at a public forum a few months before. It was simply assumed that *Spy* was now publishing this letter—a year and a half after it was written—to get back at Brown.

And then, out of the blue, *The New York Observer* reported that Charles Saatchi was buying *Spy*. It's hard to imagine that Saatchi sees in *Spy* something that no one else saw, though of course one ought not discount that possibility. After all, it's precisely the people who can see what others can't who wind up rich in the end. It's equally possible, though, that Saatchi is the new Schragis—*Spy*'s latest pigeon. One can almost picture Carter and Andersen, oozing Anglophilia, sidling up to Saatchi and whispering in his ear that with *Spy* he would be owning the American version of *Private Eye*. How would Saatchi know any better? He lives in London.

On the other hand, if Saatchi is *Spy*'s new pigeon, he's certainly not acting the part. He originally agreed to pay $5 million for the magazine, but the price has since dropped twice, presumably to take advantage of *Spy*'s increasingly desperate straits. Unlike Schragis, Saatchi knew enough to demand 51 percent of the magazine, which means that Carter, Andersen, and Phillips no longer control its destiny. Even with the sale they're not getting rich; most of Saatchi's money will be pumped into the magazine as working capital, with $1 million set aside for Schragis (who will retain a 20 percent interest) and several other limited partners. In an exquisite twist, the deal nearly collapsed after the *Spy* troika made a last-minute demand that Schragis share some of the $1 million with them. Schragis told them he would rather see the deal killed than accede to such a demand. Revenge of the nerd, you might say.

Still and all, if you're one of the *Spy* boys, things are a fair piece better than they could have been. They've got employment contracts now. They've been given a chance to buy stock options. They've got a benefactor who lives across the ocean, which holds out the possibility that he'll be less nettlesome than someone in Manhattan might be. Most of all, though, they've been able to save their beloved *Spy*, and to ensure that its brand of journalism will continue to live for the foreseeable future. Now the only problem is: Who's going to want to read it anymore?

JOSEPH NOCERA is a regular contributor to TNR.

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Sununu and Darman terrorize the GOP masses.

BEASTS OF THE BELTWAY

By Fred Barnes

The first strategy session of President Bush's 1992 re-election campaign was a downer. It was held over dinner at the J. W. Marriott Hotel two blocks from the White House on November 28, ostensibly to welcome new Republican chairman Bill Bennett to the Bush varsity. The thirty Bushies who came included Treasury Secretary Nick Brady, Republican Senators Phil Gramm of Texas and Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, consultants Roger Ailes and Bob Teeter, and half a dozen White House aides. The meeting was the idea of John Sununu, Bush's chief of staff. So he was there, along with his sidekick, budget director Richard Darman.

The gathering was meant to produce a relaxed discussion of campaign themes and good vibrations among Bush loyalists. But Bennett made the mistake of broaching the subject of taxes. Bush, he said, needed to repair his "personal credibility" as a foe of higher taxes. Bush, of course, had dropped his no new taxes pledge, approved a budget agreement with tax increases, then suddenly renewed his promise of no new taxes. Sununu bristled. He insisted Bush has no credibility problem. People poked nervously at their food, but no one challenged Sununu.

Then Gramm made a seemingly innocent suggestion. Attention should be paid, he said, to unifying Republicans after the divisive fight over the budget agreement. This prompted Sununu and Darman, who had negotiated the pact, to defend it tenaciously. Sununu attacked congressional Republicans for abandoning the president. House Republican whip Newt Gingrich, who led the opposition to the budget deal, wasn't invited to the meeting. But he was on Sununu's and Darman's mind. "You could see the Newt chip on their shoulders," said one Bush adviser. "It was a strikingly bad discussion. The death embrace [of Sununu and Darman] grew tighter."

One sour meeting won't jeopardize Bush's re-election. But there's a pattern here. Sununu and Darman are on the rampage. Cabinet members and White House aides are afraid of Sununu, leery of Darman. Both are loathed by House Republicans. Before the budget deal Darman had courted dozens of allies in Washington. Many are now enemies. Some Democrats have a good relationship with him, but that's a mixed blessing for a Republican budget chief. Sununu, though short-tempered and combative, was an extraordinarily effective chief of staff. No more. He alienated virtually every member of Congress he came in contact with in the budget talks. He outraged Senator Robert Byrd, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, by putting his feet on the table at Andrews Air Force Base and haughtily dismissing a Democratic proposal. He declared that influential Republican Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi, an opponent of the budget deal, is "insignificant." Senior Democrats now say Sununu is untrustworthy, someone with whom they can't do business.

Sununu and Darman are obsessed with the budget agreement. They defend it incessantly, keeping alive feuds spawned in the fight. They're reluctant to deviate from the budget's blueprint for domestic policy in the last two years of Bush's term. Regardless of your view of the deal (mine is negative), this isn't helping Bush. The deal, with its hefty tax increases, divides the Republican Party, roils the administration, and horrifies conservatives. By sticking tightly to it, Sununu and Darman prevent Bush from adopting a bolder domestic policy, including new tax cuts, that would attract conservatives and reunite the GOP.

At the White House, Sununu and Darman enforce a Stalinist orthodoxy on the agreement. Though Bush's approval rating dipped twenty points in the fight and the deal hasn't spurred the economy, no second-guessing is permitted. Bush may have encouraged this conformity. At Camp David he watched Sununu give a speech on C-SPAN defending the deal and called him to say he wished he'd given it. Aside from Bush, Sununu, and Darman, practically everyone else at the White House and in the Cabinet believes the deal was a political and policy disaster. Sununu would think the same, White House aides figure, if his ego weren't so involved.

On the rare occasions when Sununu hears grousing about the deal, he erupts. At a Cabinet meeting on October 24, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp pleaded with Bush to pull the plug on the budget talks and attack Democrats. Sununu barked that the White House had drafted a speech for that contingency, "a speech better than one you'd ever propose, Jack." The speech was never given. On election night Sununu confronted Kemp again at a party at Vice President Dan Quayle's residence. He denounced Republicans who'd opposed the deal as enemies. Kemp was appalled.

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Two days later, in a speech to the Heritage Foundation, Sununu denounced "conservative loudmouth senators" and other foes of the deal. Sununu got "hot under the collar" when peppered with budget questions and left in a huff, says Phil Truluck, Heritage's executive vice president. The next day Sununu addressed the Conservative Leadership Conference. Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation, a conservative ally of Sununu, advised him to "avoid the budget agreement." Sununu dwelled on it. "People were stunned," says Weyrich.

Sununu can't control his temper, Darman his intellectual arrogance. Darman once told a columnist that Bush's White House speechwriters aren't very good but he likes them anyway. How come? "They don't have any ideas," he answered. Darman regards himself as the chief thinker at the White House. In fact, he is. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of the budget and domestic policy and a gift for political strategy. He's also a shrewd social analyst. His 1989 speech skewering the "now-now-ism" of overconsumption was clever and catchy. It drew enormous attention and was widely quoted. Darman should have quit speechmaking while he was ahead.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But all politics at the White House is personal, and Darman used another speech on November 16 to attack a rival, James Pinkerton, the deputy White House assistant for policy planning. Pinkerton, in an address to the World Future Society last February, had unveiled what he calls the New Paradigm. It consists of five principles—free market orientation, choice, empowerment of the poor, decentralization, emphasis on what works—to guide post-Reagan conservatism. The speech was little noticed at the time, but lately copies have circulated like samizdat among conservative activists. Pinkerton is idolized by young conservatives as a guru, and he has some influence at the White House. In a speech to conservative leaders on April 26, Bush hailed "our New Paradigm" and spelled out the five principles. "When old centralized bureaucratic systems are crumbling, the time has come for yet another paradigm," Bush said. He acted as if he'd thought of the New Paradigm himself.

Darman wasn't aware of Bush's speech, but he heard about Pinkerton's and asked for a copy. They had had a run-in in October on another subject, Bush's political rhetoric in the closing weeks of the 1990 campaign. Pinkerton persuaded Bush to emulate President Harry Truman and excoriate Congress. For several days Bush criticized the budget deal he'd just agreed to, blaming Democrats for higher taxes. At one point he said he had to "gag" to accept the deal. "That was the last straw for Darman," says a senior Bush aide. "He complained internally about [Bush's] not taking credit for the budget deal, which he thought was a crowning achievement in [Darman's] tenure here." Darman and Pinkerton quarreled when they met in Sununu's office. Darman said Pinkerton was too fixated on the tax-and-spend issue. Pinkerton argued that it's directly related to the issue of economic self-interest, which will dominate the 1992 campaign. Darman scoffed.

In his November 16 address Darman made fun of the New Paradigm. The label "may be a bit too pretentious," he said, and the principles were "fashionable in the power-to-the-people '60s" (though he added that they have "not yet been seriously tested or evaluated"). Darman said the New Paradigm might be dismissed by the refrain, "Hey, brother, can you paradigm?" Then Darman appeared on November 21, unannounced, at a White House meeting of junior aides who are developing ideas for "empowering" the poor. "It was like a four-star general showing up at the NCO Club," says one official. Darman lectured them for thirty minutes, repeating his criticism of the New Paradigm. Pinkerton was there, but he didn't speak up. On November 17 he had gotten a call from Europe, where Bush was traveling, from Andy Card, Sununu's top aide, and was told not to respond to Darman. As Darman departed, domestic policy aide Charles Kolb thanked him for dropping by. "If we'd only known in advance, we could have sold tickets and used the proceeds for deficit reduction," Kolb told him sarcastically.

The speech and drop-by were blunders. Even Bush and Sununu thought the speech was a mistake. Conservatives, especially those in the administration, were infuriated. The New Paradigm may be vague, but it's a symbol, much like the visit of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to the Ford White House in 1975. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger barred the visit, and that became a lightning rod for conservative rage against the Kissinger-Ford policy of

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détente with the Soviet Union. It also hastened Ronald Reagan's challenge of Ford for the 1976 GOP presidential nomination. For conservatives, trashing the New Paradigm is tantamount to rejecting their agenda. "As long as Bush didn't offend conservatives, they were willing to go along with him," says a senior official. The speech by Bush's top domestic adviser offended them.

Kemp was outraged. He decided both to confront Darman head-on and to join the anti-Darman cabal. Kemp called reporters and told them he would deliver a major address on "Social Darmanism." (Republican Representative Richard Armey of Texas calls the budget deal "Darmageddon.") When Darman got wind of this, he called Kemp and offered to come by his house for a Saturday chat. Kemp said no, and they met instead over coffee at the White House mess on November 26. Kemp was not mollified. The next night Gingrich, Representative Vin Weber of Minnesota, and Bush strategist Teeter conferred over dinner at Kemp's house. Gingrich then arranged to speak at a Capitol Hill dinner the next evening hosted by *The American Spectator* and attended by two dozen journalists. He insisted on speaking on the record. Gingrich said conservatives can work with Sununu, but that Darman should quit unless he's willing to recant his speech. "I don't see how any Republican could be asked to work with a Republican Dukakis," he said.

Ironically, Darman likes Gingrich, yet has become his chief target. Sununu hates Gingrich with a real fury and is absolved. Darman dropped by Gingrich's office after the first budget package was defeated in October to show there were no hard feelings. Gingrich wrote him a thank-you note for that gesture. After Gingrich demanded he quit or recant, Darman telephoned Gingrich and talked for forty-five minutes. This time he got no thank-you. Gingrich said "nothing" was accomplished. He accused Darman of promoting "technocratic nihilism" that is "crippling the president." But at least Darman talked to him. Sununu refuses to have contact with Gingrich except at official meetings.

Sununu isn't as threatened with losing his job as Darman is. But he ought to be. Press stories about his imminent ouster are overblown, a byproduct of Sununu's bad relations with White House reporters. But Sununu contributed heavily to the political harm Bush suffered over the budget. When Democrats leaked that Bush was blocking an agreement by holding out for a capital gains tax cut, which wasn't true, Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater wanted to fight back openly. "There's an outside game going on and we need to get in it," he told Sununu and Darman. They refused, sticking to their private budget talks as Bush got pounded day after day for favoring the rich. When Sununu finally tried the outside game, he botched it. The day after Bush had indicated he might accept a higher income tax rate, he was visited by Republican senators opposed to a rate hike. Bush listened, but made no commitment. Sununu instructed Fitzwater to disclose that Bush had actually agreed with the senators. This was supposed to strengthen Sununu's bargaining position in the talks. It didn't, but it did make Bush appear to be flip-flopping wildly.

Sununu learned nothing from the lesson of Donald Regan, President Reagan's chief of staff. Regan needlessly antagonized Congress and the press. When the Iran-contra scandal broke and he got into trouble with Nancy Reagan, Regan had no allies to fall back on. Sununu too repels potential allies. At Quayle's house on election night, Sununu was approached by Lott, who wanted to patch up relations after the clash over the budget pact. "John, I'm Trent Lott from Mississippi," the senator said. Lott grinned expectantly. Sununu "didn't crack a smile or pick up on it," says Lott. Sununu asked coldly if Lott had heard any new election returns.

The controversy over the budget has created tension in the Sununu-Darman alliance. Darman's attack on Pinkerton was also an attack on Sununu, who endorsed Pinkerton's Truman strategy and got Bush to pursue it briefly. Sununu was willing to let Bush criticize parts of the budget deal; Darman wasn't. For all his truculence, Sununu is as thin-skinned as Darman. One of Sununu's aides uses a yellow highlighter to mark negative comments in articles about him. Then aides try to guess who faulted Sununu anonymously. Darman is a suspect. Stories about the budget deal were far more critical of Sununu than Darman, though the budget summit was Darman's brainchild and so was Bush's jettisoning of no new taxes. When Darman posed for a cover photo for a *Time* story on the budget, word spread quickly throughout the White House (the story didn't make the cover). Weyrich, seeking to fuel the flames, told Sununu that Darman was criticizing him in background interviews. "He looked at me and his eyes got big," says Weyrich. "He didn't say much."

Sununu thinks he's invulnerable now. He's wrong. The recession is likely to deepen in early 1991. Unless Bush pulls off a swift, stunning victory over Saddam Hussein, his public approval rating will probably drop. And he may suddenly come under pressure from a Democratic presidential candidate. Bush loyalists may come gunning for Sununu. He'd have to rely on his only base of support, conservatives. And they'd require a peace gesture: the head of Richard Darman.

Even the sacrifice of Darman won't suffice if Sununu continues his tantrum. He may have outsmarted himself in picking Bennett as Republican chairman. The idea was Sununu's alone, and he raised it with Bennett in October, weeks before Bennett resigned as drug czar. Republican Party officials Mary Matalin and Charles Black were opposed, but Sununu was adamant. Bennett seemed perfect. He has no power base in the GOP and his appointment pleased conservatives. But Bennett has no intention of being a Sununu puppet. At the Marriott dinner he distanced himself from Sununu on taxes and other issues. Bennett emerged as the monster who may devour Sununu. Now if a group walks into the Oval Office to tell Bush that Sununu must go, and Bennett agrees, conservative opposition to the idea would vanish. Then Sununu wouldn't be vulnerable. He'd be dead. ●

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Life with Father

The key element in Evan S. Connell's novels *Mrs. Bridge* and *Mr. Bridge* is the presence of the author. Connell dared to write two novels about a quite ordinary upper-middle-class couple in the late 1930s—a Kansas City lawyer and his wife who, with their three children, experience a good deal less than the vicissitudes of soap opera. Basically Connell applied some novelistic techniques of the time when he was writing (1959, 1969) to material set a generation earlier: techniques of austerity, ellipsis, and evenhandedness, along with an episodic structure, vignettes of differing length. Connell's approach had a gratifying result: the familiar was made strange. And the whole had some resemblance to a well-edited film.

Connell declined satire, the 1920s Sinclair Lewis touch that implicitly derided non-cosmopolitan lives in contrast with more sophisticated ones. Connell apparently thought his people were not more limited than other people, just differently limited, and that satire would be fundamentally disrespectful. He stood on an even footing with his characters, writing candidly but empathically. It is this sense of the author as humane observer, presenting his observations in crystalline form, that keeps a reader fixed on the two novels despite their banal stories.

Now comes a film. Ismail Merchant, the producer, James Ivory, the director, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the screenwriter, who have long been a team, were aware of the Connell qualities and have tried to reproduce them in their adaptation—of both novels—called **Mr. and Mrs. Bridge** (Miramax). The team's worst offense against the Connell quality—of steady, precise distance from his people, yet without coolness—is in using home movies of the Bridge family at the beginning and end. These seem especially vulgar, a foot-scraping plea for "identification," because the rest of the film's tone is so good. As for Connell's vignettes of varying length, film of course accommodates them perfectly.

In her adaptation, Jhabvala has tried to balance highlights of the Bridges' lives with dailiness, though inevitably there's less of the non-dramatic in the film than in the novels. Only once does she glaringly gussy up a quiet moment. She uses the ending of the first book, *Mrs. Bridge*, as the ending of the film. Mrs. Bridge, backing her car out of her garage on a snowy day, gets stuck halfway out. She can't open the doors; she's trapped in the car. She calls, "Hello? Hello out there?" but no one is around. She's in no danger; she just must sit there, while the snow falls, until her husband comes home. It's a poignant moment, gently symbolic of her status in the world, trapped, dependent on her husband. But then Jhabvala adds those closing home movies with humorous titles, to make sure it all ends jolly.

However, Mrs. Bridge's dependency is generally made at least as vivid in the film as in the novels. India Bridge is, like many of her friends, a luxury-lapped concubine and brood mare, loved and respected but incompetent in the world and almost deliberately kept so. She, like her friends, has her art lessons and country club and bridge parties; she truly loves her husband and children. She is shown becoming somewhat aware of how greatly everything in her life depends on Walter Bridge—much more than financially. He, for his part, certainly no tyrant and certainly loving of his wife and children (though he has to be prompted to say so), is typical of his fellows. This is exactly the point.

Some have called the film (and therefore the novels) social comedy. I disagree. There are funny things in it; there are funny things in *King Lear*. But comedy is not discernibly the aim. Walter Bridge is seen, in his own words, as a man who "became an attorney, not a poet" and who bears the usual mortal burden of circumscription. India Bridge is only beginning to flutter in the knowledge that she is caged. Neither of them is seen as laughable. India helps to prepare one of her daughters for a cage of her own. The other escapes. This is not comedy.

As counterpoint to India Bridge's life, we see her friend, Grace Barron, a bank president's wife. Grace is quicker to sense the cage, to be more desperate about it. She is the daughter of such antecedents as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*. Grace ends with suicide. Her role is secondary in the film, but Blythe Danner fills it beautifully, "writing" the character more fully than it was written. Grace is a more obviously dramatic part than India, but we shouldn't penalize Danner because of that. She is excellent.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

C'est la Vie. *Diane Kurys's treatment of children, in this film about a French family's summer at the beach, is only one of the delicacies. (Reviewed 12/3/90)* **Dances with Wolves.** *Kevin Costner stars in and also directs (for the first time) this story of a Union Army officer, posted to the frontier, who virtually joins a Sioux tribe. Overlong but wonderful to look at and frequently moving. (12/10/90)* **Reversal of Fortune.** *Never mind that you don't care much about the von Bülow (attempted) murder case. Jeremy Irons's performance as Claus is wickedly fascinating, and Ron Silver is a busy terrier as Alan Dershowitz. (11/19/90)* **Tilaï.** *Set in a remote village of remote Burkina Faso. A somewhat quiet but almost Greek drama of broken promises, frustrated love, and bloody retribution. The writer-director, Idrissa Ouedraogo, is a genuine talent. (12/17/90)* **—SK**

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Joanne Woodward plays India Bridge as well as she can. Woodward has the handicap of being perfect for the role. She is a somewhat undynamic actress, so it was chancy for her to play so congruent a part. A less congruent but more gifted actress could have brought some power to bear on India's powerlessness. Woodward performs intelligently, adequately, without probing very deeply.

Paul Newman, as Walter Bridge, is in precisely the opposite situation. He is one of the best actors alive, with a wide range of characters behind him, and we see his performance against that background. Thus his well-meaning but self-centered Kansas City lawyer has exactly the transformative quality that Woodward lacks. Ungratefully, however, I must note that Newman is not quite successful. Every inflection, every move, is well modeled, but there's no overall fusion. He doesn't *complete* Walter Bridge as he completed, say, the sodden Boston lawyer in *The Verdict*. Here he presents, with enormous skill, a collection of data about the character.

Possibly Newman's incompletion and Woodward's somewhat facile coziness are the responsibility of Ivory, the director. On the other hand, Ivory helped Danner, and more remarkably, he helped Austin Pendleton, as an art teacher who hits the skids—a performance unusually close to the bone for Pendleton.

And Ivory has staged some of the picture deftly. On the evening of Grace's suicide, India is seated on a hassock in her living room. Walter comes home from work and sits in the easy chair behind her. Their positions underscore lightly their relation to each other; and when she turns to tell him the news about Grace, the torque of her body gives the moment a subtle added bit of tension. ●

MOMA raises hackles about high art and mass culture.

Low and Behold

By Mark Stevens

I.

During the late 1980s the phrase "high & low" became a kind of shorthand for the effort of a generation of artists to work the edges between art and popular culture. It was a tricky phrase, a childish seesaw with an unexpected power to upset. It could be merely descriptive, referring to the traditions of high and popular culture. Or it could suggest the churning between those traditions. (Sometimes the phrase was run together as "highlow.") And it could provoke nasty partisan argument when it was used to judge relative worth. Was high really higher and low really lower or was that distinction just bourgeois politics?

The phrase also evoked the changing focus of art history. In order to emphasize the social and cultural context of art, a generation of scholars began displaying something close to contempt for the art historian's traditional concentration on connoisseurship and the evolution of style. They were mostly left-wing and interested particularly in the political ramifications of various works. This change of focus, whether or not it represented a just response to art, naturally made intellectuals combative, either in the defense of a perceived threat to standards or in the attack on traditional hierarchies of value.

At its most complicated, the phrase even became incantatory. It aroused not ideas or arguments but moody sensations, steeped in the shadows of memory and by now familiar inversions of value, about how art might "live" today—about what is possible, what can be hoped for, in a mass society. In my mind, "high & low" evokes at worst a rat's nest of fancy ideological string and gnawed-up newspaper, at best a version of Plato's cave, where, haunted by the phantasmic flicker between a higher and lower reality, one must constantly locate, catch, hold on to, define but not kill, something precious that keeps changing shape.

By calling their exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art "High & Low," instead of leaving it at just "Modern Art and Popular Culture," Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik stirred up these many meanings of the phrase so that just about everyone could find a reason to be offended. They deserved better from their critics, at the very least civil thought about a theme that is crucial to an era permeated by mass culture and uncertain about what

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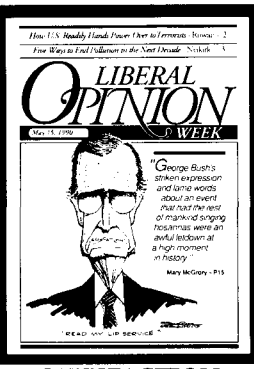

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constitutes genuine value. Their show fails to take the full measure of high & low, but no more so than the attacks directed at them.

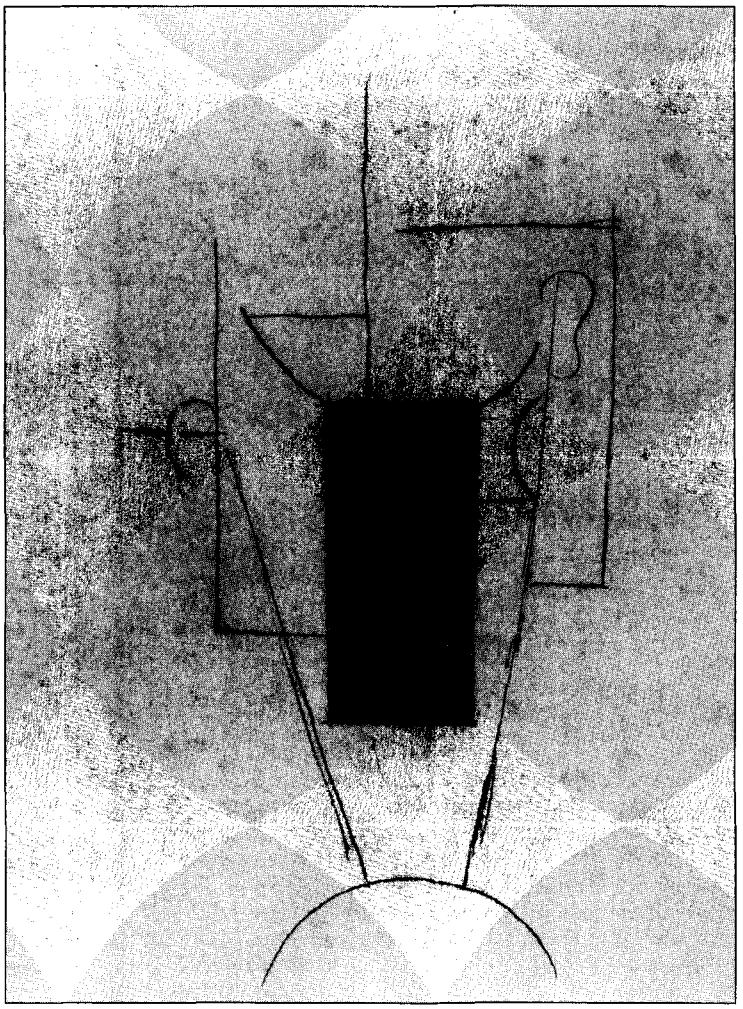
Apart from the deeper difficulties of the theme, however, their exhibit has an unusual personality—that seems the only word—that also unsettles discussion. Varnedoe and Gopnik are scholars passionately in love with their subject; their show and the catalog that accompanies it can exasperate in much the same way that lovers do. They appear too knowing, as if they have reinvented the wheel. They sometimes seem oblivious to what others might think. They are impatient with pessimism or cold judgment. Their prose is ripe, the manner is scholarly romantic.

To begin with, the show acts too grand. It is organized around the interplay between modern art and graffiti, comics, advertising, and caricature, which already covers a great deal. With a theme as large as "modern art and popular culture," however, it cannot possibly cover enough. As a result, "High & Low" is full of holes. One can't help feeling around for gaps until what's missing can seem more important than what's there. Two holes are screamingly obvious. To mount a big exhibit about modern art and popular culture that does not include the other visual arts—photography, architecture and design, TV, the movies—is like organizing a show about Buddhism that leaves out the smile. MOMA has played a great role in recognizing the importance of those arts to modern cultural life. Letting slip the opportunity to mobilize its various departments around this great common theme seems like a near affront to that tradition.

The second hole is contemporary art, which appears as an afterthought in the exhibit (though not in the catalog). Only three artists are included, Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, and Elizabeth Murray. Koons and Holzer are already overexposed. Murray deserves a deeper look. On political grounds alone, selecting just three was foolish, especially since the High & Low theme is precisely what now excites so many young artists. Room might have been found for more of a survey. Or the show might have announced that it ended in 1980. Or the curators might even have said, sorry, these are the only three we really like, you want to fight? Anything but this seeming diffidence, this meek little dribbling out.

The exhibit opens with a dramatic flourish, in an attempt to evoke the aura of popular culture. A mock-up of a Parisian kiosk displays reproductions of newspapers from the period when the cubists were making their collages, and visitors can pick up a guide to the exhibit in the form of a newspaper. Just past the kiosk, on the walls facing the great collages of Picasso and Braque, are reproductions of many of the pages actually clipped, so that one can see the rest of the headline for Picasso's punning "URNAL/ Coup de the" snip. (It's the newspaper's name, *Le Journal*, under which is the headline "Un Coup de théâtre," referring to an armistice in the Balkans.) Unfortunately the kiosk looks stagy. Without a decent amount of grime and the furtive smell of cigar ashes, a newspaper stand appears soulless, stupid. And the neatly laid-out pages don't really catch the smudgy spirit of newsprint.

There is no satisfactory way to present popular culture in a museum: it always appears denatured, an ocean without its roar. The best thing is simply to present the material in a neutral, dignified manner and pay your visitors the compliment of expecting them to use their imaginations. In the later rooms, examples of popular culture are presented more straightforwardly. Still, the "low" material often seems quarantined in glass cases, as if it were some precious, secretive little discovery. And the exhibit tends toward the preachy (people in love often talk too much).



PABLO PICASSO, *HEAD OF A MAN* (1912)

Interspersed throughout the exhibit are panels that explain the main points of the relation between modern art and caricature, advertising, comics, and graffiti. In the section on advertising, for example, there is a big sign, part of which goes like this:

> . . . Around World War I, the young painter Fernand Léger proclaimed that art was being challenged by new kinds of "spectacle" forged by modern commerce to capture the public imagination. Huge new billboards, intruding giant letters and vibrant hues into daily life, seemed to rout all traditional ideas of harmony. Léger's monumental vision of "The City" (1919) [SHOWN IN THIS ROOM] . . .

Note that last parenthesis: it literally makes art a parenthesis to the idea. The idea itself is fine, but art (at least until recently) has usually been more than the sum of its ideas. It is better to let art speak for itself—that is, not speak—thereby allowing the visitor, if he wishes, to make his own connections. The first time I went through this show I grew glassy-eyed with reading.

Despite the constant telling, the exhibit's strength also stems from the passion Varnedoe and Gopnik bring to their subject. They will go to any length to discover information about the sources of favored works of art. The "source-search" in the catalog—a truly plummy book—is fascinating, obsessive. You can learn a great deal about the commercial display

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of plumbing fixtures at the time Duchamp showed his famous R. Mutt urinal "fountain." And do you want to see the catalogs of corsets pored over by Max Ernst?

The curators are no less passionate in describing how the affair between high and low works. Around the turn of the century, for example, Parisian stores began isolating objects in window displays, hoping to catch the consumer's eye. (The exhibit displays a marvelous photograph of a shop window in which we see walking hats.) This commercial practice clearly came as a revelation to the dadaists and the surrealists, who would isolate objects, disturbing their context, in similar ways. As Duchamp put it, the artist hoped to give "a new thought to that object."

Again and again, Varnedoe and Gopnik find, artists would draw on old pop culture, instead of what was current in their day. The cubists, for example, were attracted to earlier, blocky typestyles instead of to contemporary styles. Their taste was picked up by the Russian avant-garde (the show includes wonderful instances of Rodchenko's designs for cigarette packages and pulp novels) and finally found its way into glossy magazines. The famous Campbell's soup can (which Warhol made emblematic of the 1960s) was actually designed around the turn of the century.

The show presents some well-known—though little seen—juxtapositions. In a room of Lichtenstein's early pop paintings are some of the actual comic books of the period, enabling one to see exactly how the artist heightened, enlarged, and clarified the cartoons, making an art that holds an ironic mirror to the pop emotions without indulging in easy parody or condescension. Lichtenstein re-creates the cartoons with such compositional care that their unearned emotion suddenly becomes earned. It seems an act of saving, of generosity. Miró clipped out industrial designs, which he turned into collages and then paintings. "... And standardized images of objects or machines could become—under an eye such as that of Joan Miró—strange creatures of the imagination [SEE MIRÓ'S PAINTINGS BASED ON COLLAGES OF ADVERTISING IMAGES, SHOWN IN THIS ROOM]."

The curators' most appealing passion, however, is for the predicament of the artist himself. They sympathetically render the mental life of the twentieth-century artist who wants to acknowledge the character of his own time without betraying the high example of the old masters. Their catalog brims with insight about how individ-

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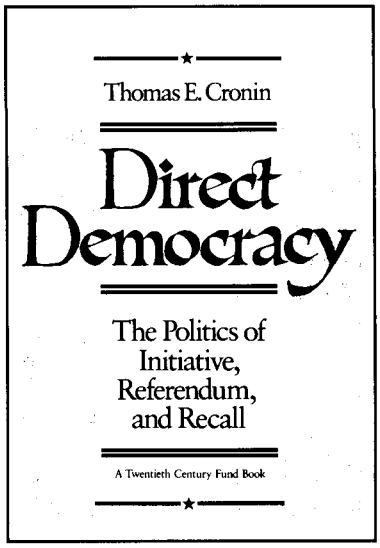

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LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI
MODERNITY ON ENDLESS TRIAL

University of Chicago Press

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ual works of art come to be created, and is often brilliant at tracing the evolution of ideas, the currents of desire, in modern art. This sensitivity to what it means to be an artist at a particular moment makes the art seem close at hand, something done by flesh and blood instead of otherworldly genius.

Yet much of the show's interest lies in connections that transcend the billboard thoughts and the too-tight organization into graffiti, comics, caricature, and advertising. For example, there is a certain quality of light, flat but radiant, in the art of the early-century visionaries who expected mass culture to transform the nature of mankind for the better. This light has its origins less in the traditions of high art than in, say, the spanking brightness of a piece of newly minted steel machinery. You can see it in Rodchenko's advertising designs for the new Soviet state or in Léger's *The City*, a paean to the billboard. In the work of these two great artists the light is not merely mechanical, it is touched with rapture and what I can't help thinking of as innocence—as if light is now newly naked, requiring nothing more than a clean surface and the chance to illuminate another world.

That new light is present in other works, too, but without the rapture or the innocence. On display is an astonishing and rather grotesque portrayal in stained glass of the Michelin man (a cartoony character named Bibendum made of automobile tires). Instead of creating a divine glow in the darkness, the traditional function of stained glass, the work celebrates a commercial light that seems to emerge out of the memory of a supplanted civilization. Yet another version of that modern light appears in James Rosenquist's room-sized "F-111," in which one glimpses jet fighters on all sides. Here the light looks as clean, as empty of the past, as Léger's—but also oddly empty of affect, like sun off metal in Southern California.

What about the character of the light in the great cubist collages? Was it like Léger's—glancing off the surface, quick with young hope? We can't quite know; the light has aged, the newsprint decaying into a dark yellow, lending a patina to the momentary. An odd, disturbing effect, not unlike what Keats saw in the Grecian Urn.

II.

Taking a position on high & low is, among other things, a way of announcing where you stand, and what you consider serious, in contemporary culture. Since the opening of this exhibition, three general views have been taken on how one should judge the high & low relationship. Each of these views, including the curators', is too narrow.

In *The New York Observer*, Hilton Kramer spoke of his "revulsion" upon visiting this exhibit. His principal concern, here as always, was to defend the aesthetic experience itself, to protect it from those who threaten to translate works of art into something else—into social history, big bucks, or lower experience. In this show, he writes, "the high art of Cubism is tethered to the low culture of turn-of-the-century newspapers, and the claim is made that the debt of the former to the latter must somehow be profound." And he goes on:

> But the room in which the achievements of Cubism are reduced to a kind of cultural parity with the newspapers of the day is only the first of the horrors that await us in this show. When we find further on that Picasso's great portrait of Gertrude Stein—here on loan from the Met—is presented to us as an example of the way the conventions of pop caricature have shaped modern painting, we know straightaway that in "High & Low" we are in the presence of one of the most unconscionable intellectual swindles we have ever seen in a serious museum.

In fact, with the exception of the room of newspaper clippings, it would be quite easy to overlook the examples of popular culture in this show, so discreetly are they presented. A few, like the cartoons by Herriman or McCay, are themselves marvelous works. And while the organizers should have acknowledged the many other elements influencing Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein, they do no damage to that great picture by pointing out the possible influence of caricature.

More to the point, is it true that our aesthetic experience is compromised when we see great cubist collages in the presence of newspaper clippings? Have they been "tethered," dragged down? Is it impossible that low materials can have a "profound" bearing upon the meaning of a work? Whatever the blindness of some contemporary art historians to aesthetic concerns, surely Meyer Schapiro demonstrated that social meanings may enter into our appreciation of a work of art. And in a late essay called "What is Criticism?," Lionel Trilling, also no deadbeat when it came to worrying about the vulgarization of culture, wrote:

> To perceive a work not only in its isolation, as an object of aesthetic contemplation, but also as implicated in the life of a people at a certain time, as expressing that life, and as being in part shaped by it, does not, in most people's experience, diminish the power or charm of the work but, on the contrary, enhances it.

In a way, Schapiro should be the godfather of this show, for he has frequently called attention to the artist's complex relation to "low" objects or social circumstances. In doing so, he has never diminished our aesthetic experience of the work of art, even when he has employed a Marxist-inspired methodology. Instead, the links he has traced have deepened our feeling for the social or personal passion of the artist, which inevitably informs the artist's search for significant form. Everything about a great artist can excite and illuminate; about a mediocre artist, however, nothing escapes the dead hand of sociological pedantry. Scholars may find Schapiro's famous essay on Courbet and popular imagery, which appeared as long ago as 1941, somewhat dated, but I am not aware of any critic who argues that Schapiro lessened Courbet, or subverted the high in the name of the low, or (to use Kramer's word) swindled the history of art out of anything. Schapiro's exploration of Courbet's debt to the popular imagery of his day established a model for how the relationship between high and low should responsibly be construed.

The cultural context of cubism, similarly, can enrich our aesthetic experience of it, like the chorus behind a singer, so long as we do not reduce the art only to such things or deny the transformation that has taken place. Whether or not the cubists' debt to newspapers was profound, surely it is interesting to investigate what and why a great artist chooses to transform or contrast or juxtapose. In the first twenty-five years of this century, artists of many kinds felt impelled to conjoin, not always neatly, various highs and lows—Joyce brought together, with jarring beauty, Ulysses and modern Dublin, and Eliot glimpsed the ancient wisdoms through the soot and the cracks of modern life.

Didn't the young cubists do something similar when they brought the disinterested, classical spirit of the elderly Cézanne into the streets of Paris? (An accompanying volume of essays to the show contains a brilliant account by Jeffrey S. Weiss on the strikingly "cubist" character of the music halls frequented by Picasso and the rest.) Is emphasizing that aspect in one exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art really an "unconscionable intellectual swindle"? Surely high art is stronger and more resilient than Kramer supposes. The cubist collages look particularly beautiful when one is reminded of the character of newspapers—like gold set against straw.

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Meanwhile, across the critical spectrum from Kramer, art is regularly translated into a form of politics. Any attempt to present art as "high" and "low"—allegedly reflecting the current power structure of society—engages in "hegemonic discourse." All discrimination is political discrimination. Before the MOMA show opened, Barbara Kruger wrote a piece for *The New York Times* that nicely encapsulated many currently fashionable views.

Kruger regards those who try to set up categories like high and low with the condescension of a free spirit for a Dickensian drudge. Here's a piece of her piece:

> But wait a minute. What's the matter with great achievements? And what about values and standards? Is that the muttering I hear in the wings? Isn't it a bit foolhardy to propose an end to the structures that really matter? Matter to whom, I ask. Isn't it possible that technological developments have both changed our lives and broadened the cultural field? And that segments of society are not discrete categories but rather simultaneous processes that collide, seep, and withdraw with, into, and from one another.
>
> Seeing is no longer believing. The very notion of truth and how it manifests itself in pictures and words has been put into crisis. In a world bloated with images, we are finally learning that photographs do indeed lie. In a society rife with purported information, we know that words have power, but usually when they don't mean anything (as Peggy Noonan and Company have ably demonstrated). To put it bluntly, no one's home. We are literally absent from our own present. We are elsewhere, not in the real but in the represented. Our bodies, the flesh and blood of it all, have given way to representations: figures that cavort on TV, movie, and computer screens. Propped up and ultrarelaxed, we teeter on the cusp of narcolepsy and believe everything and nothing. . . .
>
> And isn't it time we realized that there's a political aspect to every conversation we have, every deal we make, every face we kiss?

Anyone who keeps up will, of course, have his or her own views on this familiar line. What I find remarkable, in terms of high & low, is how casually Kruger dispenses with high—as something irrelevant because it comes from off "in the wings," just the "muttering" of, one assumes, some senile old elitists. She is every bit as cavalier with high culture as Kramer is with mass culture. She is yet another of those who write as if suddenly, in their particular time, everything has changed forever, the situation having become so special that any responsibility toward inherited values no longer applies. In a critic (though not always in an artist) this is one of the coarsest forms of intellectual vanity. Even if Kruger were right, the lightness with which she regards history, the ease with which she dismisses the old world, is trashy. Forget greatness because of "technological developments"?

There is only one worthy tradition, in this view, and that is the assault on tradition. To read Kruger you would think that tradition is nothing but an onerous imposition of outmoded categories and forms, when in truth it is, in a deeper sense, a kind of conscience, an example of high achievement won from circumstances at least as difficult as our own. The past (in the guise of tradition) has always served as the most important critic of the present.

And then there is that talk of "representations." Gertrude Stein said nothing changes, only what people choose to see. What Kruger and the Baudrillard bunch choose to see is "representations" and the power of the mass media. We live "not in the real but in the represented," as she says. This, too, may have some truth, but does it absolve one of all responsibility to other ways of seeing? When artists feel content merely to criticize the obvious, instead of discovering the overlooked, the imagination of a culture begins to atrophy.

The catalog's own conclusion presents a view of high & low that claims liberation from the distractions of ideology. It begins with an attack on mankind's attraction to the Platonic *eidos*, the essential ideas thought to underlie the changeable shadows of reality. In the study of modern art, the search for governing patterns or underlying essences has often blinded us to the eccentric details of individual achievement. The authors note their obsessive exploration of detail and elevate it to a principle:

> By emphasizing small stories about people and objects instead of big abstractions about terms and categories, we set out to replace mute, complacent generalities with the eloquence of peculiar facts. And what we have seen in these pages is not an encounter between an immutable ideal of "high" or serious art and an equally unvarying "low" culture. Instead we have seen that high art in our century, far from having a unified "project" or direction, has always included the most disparate attitudes, intentions, gestures, and critiques; and that the forms and intentions of advertising, graffiti, or comics have been diverse, and subject to varying rhythms of change. Between these two general zones there has been, instead of a rigidly fixed line, a constant series of transgressions and redirections, in which the act of an individual imagination has been able to alter in a moment the structure of the high-to-low relationship. Schwitters picks up a tram ticket and sees in it a component of his art; as a result, our ideas about tram tickets, and our ideas about art, change . . .

Varnedoe and Gopnik propose an approach derived from evolutionary biology, which "plots patterns of growth and change, but denies given destinies, permanent foreclosures, and underlying essences." Left and right are similar in their

> shared, unconscious allegiance to what some philosophers would call "essentialism." Able to imagine historical understanding only in terms of penetrating the veils of mere appearance to get at an underlying truth, both "left" and "right" alike end up arguing over the type rather than charting the variability.

In calling for a theory emancipated from "typological thinking," the authors are attacking those (particularly Clement Greenberg) who have "invented an imaginary system of powerful strategies and programmed destinies, usually associated with a notion of uncontaminated aesthetic elevation." They are also attacking deconstructionism, whose exaggerated "intellectual nihilism" is the "inevitable offspring of a disappointed essentialism." Varnedoe and Gopnik, as well as Robert Storr, the new curator for contemporary art at MOMA, who wrote a sharp attack on Greenberg in the accom-

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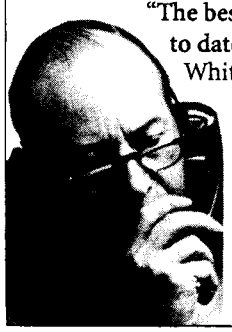

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panying volume of essays, quote Baudelaire's call for the critic of modern life to "re-enter modernity in the fullness of its enduring ambiguity."

As presented in the catalog, this open approach to modern art—indeed, to modern life—seems democratic in its appetites, free in its spirit, bracing and brave in its willingness to engage one's own time. "Hell, half the world wants to be like Thoreau at Walden worrying about the noise of the traffic on the way to Boston," said Franz Kline. "The other half use up their lives being part of that noise. I like the second half." This approach even finds a place for humor, so sorrily lacking in most writing of both left and right. But it misses much, too. It treats unjustly those concerned about the "noise"—I mean the tradition in high & low of doubt and melancholy, of spiritual darkening and withdrawal, of the attempt to preserve high values against the bright attractions of the contemporary culture.

Varnedoe and Gopnik (and Storr) want to celebrate the relationship between high and low and defend it from its critics; and this makes them intolerant of intolerance. The main bugbear, not surprisingly, is Greenberg. Now widely denounced as a "formalist," Greenberg has never disguised his contempt for mass culture and most of the recent art that makes use of it. Moreover, his work has the testy, hectoring tone of a displeased father. The Oedipal battle with Greenberg still remains irresistible to many critics, though his limitations have been obvious for a long time (his analysis of abstract expressionism is brilliant but narrow, and the artists he championed after Pollock appear smaller by the year).

It is not Greenberg's picks and pans that matter, however, any more than it now matters that Baudelaire celebrated Guys and hardly noted Manet and Courbet. What matters is his nasty intolerance, his historical hubris, his vain single-mindedness, his wish to segregate. They are the sour residue of a devotion to purity, which in his case meant an art distilled into its purely visual properties. Greenberg created a modern academy, a severe and imposing edifice dedicated to the eternal verities of form and the underlying principles of history. Alas, no one came along to make the dogmas beautiful. It is a hollow, almost empty structure. Yet his "academy" (whose elect were the avant-garde) is a creation, an act of vision, that has helped preserve a space for what, at bottom, is the classical impulse in Western culture.

The attack in the catalog's conclusion on "essentialist" thinking may be appropriate to evolutionary biology, but in art those who look for the overarching generalization, or the underlying principle, represent a vital part of both the creative and the critical imagination. The show does not address seriously what such sensibilities have brought to the dynamics of high & low. In particular, it condescends to the stricter kinds of judgment. It does not make a point, for example, of analyzing the passion to distinguish between major and minor, which is one way that "high" culture questions itself. Nor is there any sympathy for the desire to maintain a boundary between high and low; the porous interchange is what fascinates. Borrowing a line from Clive James, Varnedoe and Gopnik assert that they are more interested in "values than categories."

When it's put that way, nobody, of course, would want to be on the side of categories—but values can inhere in categories, as difficult as that may be to understand in our culture. Is the painter Philip Guston a greater artist, for example, than the cartoonist R. Crumb, with whom he shares similarities? To some that question will seem prissy, uninteresting. Guston is good. Crumb is good. Maybe Guston is greater, but why insist upon these dreary walls? Yet the violation of boundaries in modern art has generated power in part because the boundaries are meaningful. Guston is the greater artist, partly because he is working within a high tradition that can bring more to bear than a cartoon can. His paintings harbor those reserves of memory.

Little emphasis is placed on formal power, on visual hierarchies. Yet in contemporary painting the weakening of craft, of technique, is obvious. An academy was supposed to teach the mechanics, at the very least; Greenberg's version passed the job of master to history, with the self-conscious student of history serving as apprentice. That didn't work well, but Greenberg at least found a way to insist that art must have art. In Varnedoe and Gopnik's catalog, the belief that mass culture might damage as well as invigorate art comes across as the province, principally, of cranks.

III.

I don't think one can come to terms with the tricky little phrase without a glance further afield, particularly into the history of art before modernism. During the Renaissance, a fissure opened in Western culture far more profound than the one under examination here, that between the sacred and the secular; and high & low retains a certain spiritual charge, often disguised, that derives from this earlier fissure. Giotto and his teacher Cimabue helped initiate the great but unstable enterprise of bringing heaven down to earth; or, one might equally say, of raising earth toward heaven.

Those who invert stale hierarchies by acknowledging the "low"—whether the name is Caravaggio or Courbet or Picasso—are heroes in the modern style. It is easy to admire them. It is also easy for us to admire, in the modern way, artists with a more playful outlook who can't abide anything too high or holy. Although they begin to flourish after the Renaissance, the arts of graffiti, caricature, dada have an attractive way of bringing the mighty down to earth. In Western culture, the devolution of the Word into mere words inevitably makes any effort to get too highfalutin, too holy, subject to a Babel of riotous complaint.

It is more difficult to admire those idealizing temperaments (like Greenberg) who recoil from the topsy-turvy of modern life. When the Word became words and the space of painting deepened into three dimensions, artists fell rapturously in love with the new world of possibility—with details instead of generalizations, with art instead of religion, with their own reflection instead of God's. Yet they also invited idolatry, disorder, and pettiness into art when they turned to the "lower" world, leaving behind the abstract forms of religion. Those who distrust the present, perhaps wanting to restore a classical "high," often recall us to the dream of a more integrated, less fissured culture.

Each approach to high & low, whether mandarin or slumming, has its moments of glory and of decay. Shouldn't this be obvious? Our history since the Renaissance teaches us that the mandarins can be sclerotic, crabbed, merely genteel—or the transmitters of genuine value. And that those who work with low culture can revive dying "high" traditions or trivialize living ones. High & low seems to be the way Western culture must breathe, now drawing in the fresh, now expelling the false. Each can have the force of necessity. The questions are always, Where is the vitality now? What is needed now?

The answer to those questions is never obvious. That is why the arrogant confidence with which almost everyone has approached this exhibit is comically vain. On this theme, the record of critics in the past has been so poor that a little restraint, a little humility, might have been in order. In any case, the fact that there is an exhibit called "High & Low" at the Museum of Modern Art suggests at the very least that our understanding of

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art history is in an expansive phase—that we are in a period whose thrust is to enrich the formalist understanding of modernism.

As for where the vitality may be found in art, I suspect just the opposite is true: that the crying need is now for contraction, for severity, for a skeptical view of mass culture as a subject. Critics, like generals, usually fight the last war. "High & Low's" attack on Greenberg and its spirited defense of using and enjoying "low" sources—directed at the pious left as well as the pious right—are not very surprising.

In a way, the catalog is too eloquent. Even conceiving such an exhibit indicates a high degree of self-consciousness, a dangerous fluency with the crossover principles of high & low. In the catalog essay on contemporary art, for example, there is an honest, worried tone. While more enthusiastic than I am about such artists as Holzer and Koons, Varnedoe and Gopnik almost sound as if they're trying to convince themselves:

> For all the declarations of the impossibility of the new and original in the world we inhabit, artists continue to allow us to experience sensibility as history, to refract through willfully banal and eccentric objects and orderings of objects—seven-foot-tall polychromed bears and the lights of deli signs and the maxims of fortune cookies—a sense of the way we live now.

But art has other duties besides providing a sense of the way we live now. Dwight Macdonald defined "midcult" as art that uses an advanced "modern idiom in the service of the banal." An artist like Koons has a contemporary buzz; he is funny and does some cute riffs on Duchamp. But he is manifestly minor, a midcult artist with too little feeling for how we lived before to escape succumbing to the contemporary banal, even if it's the "willfully banal." Eventually, one may grow weary of "the important superficialities that are the essence of modernity," to borrow Baudelaire's line. What is deep cannot find form if we regard the power of surface with too much awe.

In going through the MOMA show, I found myself savoring the bright challenge, as well as the compliment, that high art delivered to popular culture. This did not really seem a matter of right and left, but rather an act of will to protect what matters. Why does crossing the hermetic and the vernacular—turning newspapers into an obscure private language—bring such pleasure? Private jokes are relished by those resisting a greater power, guerrilla actions that reclaim space for one's values amid the indifferent chatter of the city. Why is Léger's celebration of pop spectacle so supremely satisfying, if not because it transforms cheap power into a utopian current? Or Miró's seductions of cold machines so magical? Why do artists repeatedly choose old pop motifs, if not to awaken the dead present?

The great conservative critics—Coleridge, Arnold, Eliot—typically understood the threat to high culture in social terms. They believed that a social solution was necessary to resist the pressure of capitalism and mass culture. This usually involved finding a way to sustain and to protect a class of those devoted to the highest (typically aesthetic) values. Even Macdonald, who always tried to play the tough guy, displayed some sympathy for the idea of setting up a class of the select few in his essay on "Masscult and Midcult." This is very sentimental. Very cramping, too. Enjoying a rock tune is not a crime of sensibility.

But their deeper intuition, precisely because it receives only crabby respect nowadays, deserves particular attention. The classic critics were poets first; they sensed the weakening of cherished values as the erosion of a language, the subversion of poetry by prose; they resisted. In our civilization, prose constantly challenges poetry. It has virtues, and the upper hand. Still, it does not own all the words. There is no final word. ●

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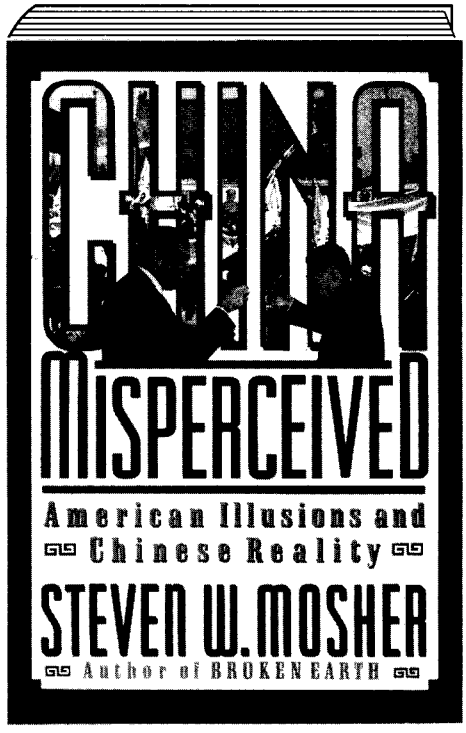

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The Trouble with Harry

By Hermione Lee

Rabbit at Rest by John Updike

(Knopf, 544 pp., $21.95)

When *Rabbit at Rest* was recently published in Britain, John Updike made an appearance on television. Smiling urbanely in a solid tweed jacket, and looking like a priest disguised as a banker, he seemed to identify uncomplicatedly with Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom as a "good person"—"good enough for me to like him." In *Rabbit, Run*, we were told, he acted out Updike's unfulfilled desire to have been a six-foot-three basketball hero. In *Rabbit Redux*, he reflected Updike's own "conflicted" conservatism. In *Rabbit is Rich*, his own happiness. In *Rabbit at Rest*, his mixed feelings of being worn-out and ill-at-ease and yet still in love with his country.

An epitaph for Rabbit? "Here lies an American man." This neat formulation went unchallenged by his interviewer, but probably Updike's statements as a smiling public man should be distrusted. For what goes on in the Rabbit books is much stranger than he makes out. Rabbit is certainly solid and "real," a very thick fictional entity. Part of the joke of the name (more easily recognized, I suppose, in 1960, when people still read Sinclair Lewis) is its echo of Babbitt, whose idea of the ideal citizen ("At night he lights up a good cigar, and climbs into the little old bus, and maybe cusses the carburetor, and shoots out home") is one of the epigrams for *Rabbit is Rich*, the smuggest book of the four. When Rabbit supports Nixon and Vietnam in *Rabbit Redux*, or hangs around the wife-swapping clubhouse types in *Rabbit is Rich*, he seems a stable enough piece of the American booboisie, a spokesman (though in a language he would never use himself) for the American dream: "America is beyond power, it acts as in a dream, as a face of God. Wherever America is, there is freedom, and wherever America is not, madness rules with chains, darkness strangles millions. Beneath her patient bombers, paradise is possible."

But Rabbit as ideal citizen has always been a problem. His years of glory as a 1940s high school basketball champion in Mt. Judge, a suburb of Brewer, Pennsylvania, are well past by the time the first book begins, when he is 26. Right from the start, then, he is looking back on lost virtue. What takes place inside his continuing present is mostly dismal, squalid, or banal. In *Rabbit, Run*, trapped by parents, parents-in-law, local minister, and his miserable small family, Rabbit runs out on his alcoholic wife, Janice, who accidentally drowns their baby while their small son Nelson looks on. Then Rabbit leaves his pregnant mistress Ruth (a lapsed hooker) and returns to Janice. Ten years on in *Rabbit Redux*, the book of the '60s, Janice goes off to have an affair, and Rabbit takes Jill and Skeeter, a rich lost hippy girl and her black revolutionary friend, into his house. Teenaged Nelson observes their sexual and political skirmishing. One night (while Rabbit is next door making love to the mother of Nelson's best friend) the house is burned down by racist neighbors, and Jill is killed. In the '70s Rabbit gets "rich" in his wife and mother-in-law's Toyota business. He buys gold, and he and Janice make love covered in Krugerrands, but out there in Carter's America the gasoline is running out and the hostage crisis is running on.

Now, in *Rabbit at Rest*, the greedy Rabbit of the Reagan years has become hugely overweight. On a quarrelsome family holiday in Florida, where he and Janice now have a condominium, he takes his granddaughter out sailing and has a heart attack and an operation—not a bypass, which terrifies him, but an angioplasty, to unclog his arteries from all "the old grease I've been eating." Meanwhile the wretched Nelson is stealing from the Toyota franchise to feed his cocaine habit and is beating up his wife, and Janice is becoming increasingly independent. (Rabbit "preferred her incompetent.") Nelson's secrets come out and she gets him to a rehabilitation center, from which he emerges talking in an "aggravating tranquilized nothing-can-touch-me tone." But Rabbit alone refuses to be cured of junk food and irresponsible desires, and out of the hospital he finds himself unexpectedly making love to his daughter-in-law. When she tells on him, he runs away to Florida, where, after a last pathetic attempt at a basketball game with a group of black kids, Rabbit has another, probably terminal, heart attack.

Rabbit reaches the climax of his career as "an American man" in *Rabbit at Rest* by playing Uncle Sam in his hometown July Fourth parade, his heart Babbittishly thumping at the feeling that "this is the happiest fucking country the world has ever seen." Are we supposed to take this seriously? The episode has an uneasy tone, partly ironic (his goatee is coming unstuck with sweat, he is having to stay back from the lead car in the parade "so Uncle Sam doesn't look too associated with the police"), but also embarrassingly mawkish, as Rabbit's eyes burn at the strains of "God Bless America." Even here, Rabbit's Babbittry is not stable or comfortable: like the disastrous family barbecue he decides to have in Florida, "it sounds ideally American but had its shaky underside."

When Rabbit starts out, in *Rabbit, Run*, making the journey south that the older Rabbit finally completes, he stops at a wayside café and looks around at the other customers. They all seem to him to "amplify his strangeness." "He had thought, he had read, that from shore to shore all America was the same. He wonders, is it just these people I'm outside, or is it all America?" There are times when Updike wants to put him inside, to make the overweight ex-sports-champ car salesman a voice for the American dream, a paradigm for an American era. In *Rabbit at Rest* he seems to be doing this more, but it's equivocal.

The analogies between a Rabbit reduced by illness, who has lost domestic authority and is being pushed out of the Toyota business, and America under Bush ("we're kind of on the sidelines . . . doing nothing works for Bush, why not for him") are explicit enough to be acknowledged by the other characters, and by Rabbit himself. There's no doubt that Rabbit's compulsive junk snacking, Nelson's addiction, the ruin of the business, even granddaughter Judy's compulsive flicking between TV channels ("an impatient rage . . . a gluttony for images") are meant as figures for American waste and greed: "Everything falling apart, airplanes, bridges, eight years under Reagan of nobody minding the store, making money out of nothing, running up debt, trusting in God."

This would just be dull, post-Reagan disapproval (sometimes it *is* a bit dull) if Rabbit weren't so oddly ambivalent. He is the emblem of the obnoxious age, but he is also outside it, minding about it,

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alienated by it. A lonely Rabbit. Nelson and Janice are more at home in America than Rabbit, and he distrusts the language they use. "Faux," he notices, seeing tourist signs on Route 27 for museums and antiques ("Old, old, they sell things as antiques now that aren't even as old as he is, another racket") is itself a false word: "*False* is what they mean." Rabbit spends a lot of time skeptically listening to (brilliantly travestied) "faux" languages, from Nelson's rehabilitated sermons on low self-esteem and Janice's women's group pieties, vindictively ridiculed ("all those patriarchal religions tried to make us feel guilty about menstruating"), to the health-speak of heart surgeons ("For my money, not to keep beating about the bush, the artery bypass is the sucker that does the job") and waitresses ("it's wonderful if you're going macrobiotic seriously and don't mind that slightly bitter taste, you know, that seaweed tends to have"). These languages are all about getting yourself cleaned up and becoming a better product. Unlike everyone else in the novel, the salesman Rabbit is losing faith in sales talk.

And in other American myths, too. Harry and Janice take their bored grandchildren on a tour of the Edison house in Florida (one of the novel's dazzling set pieces), but Harry doesn't buy the guide's sickly spiel about Edison as "the amazing great American." "It was all there in the technology, waiting to be picked up," says Harry. "All this talk about his love for mankind, I had to laugh!" Edison was just another greedy American consumer. Money is all anything is about. When they close Kroll's, the big downtown Brewer department store, "just because shoppers had stopped coming in," Rabbit understands that

> the world was not solid and benign, it was a shabby set of temporary arrangements rigged up for the time being, all for the sake of the money. You just passed through, and they milked you for what you were worth. . . . If Kroll's could go, the courthouse could go, the banks could go. When the money stopped, they could close down God Himself.

God Himself another American artifact, and no one to trust, after all.

And so Updike has it both ways. Harry is Uncle Sam, but he's also Ishmael. He is all too American and he is alienatedly un-American. He fits in with that long line of Hs, from Huck to Holden to Humbert to Herzog, who carry the freight of American history but are outside of it, looking on. But there is a difference. Harry lacks charisma.

Who likes Rabbit, apart from his author? Sexist, dumb, lazy, illiterate (he spends the whole novel not finishing a book on American history), a terrible father (for Nelson he's "a big dead man on his chest"), an inadequate husband, an unreliable lover, a tiresome lecher, a failing businessman, a cowardly patient, a typically "territorial" male: What kind of moral vantage point is this? Here is Rabbit, for instance, shaking hands with a dying homosexual:

> Squinting, Harry takes the offered hand in a brief shake and tries not to think of those little HIVs, intricate as tiny spaceships, slithering off onto his palm and up his wrist and arm into the sweat pores of his armpit and burrowing into his bloodstream there. He wipes his palm on the side of his jacket and hopes it looks like he's patting his pocket.

This awful joke brilliantly caricatures the lowest common denominator of reactions to AIDS, implicating readers who pride themselves on being too liberal and informed to think like this. There is even a kind of charm to the episode, in Harry's anxiety not to offend, and in the gap between what his mind and his hand are doing. The charm of Rabbit, such as it is, has to do with the distance between his feelings and his behavior, or with his own surprise at what he seems to be like:

> Though his inner sense of himself is of an innocuous passive spirit, a steady small voice, that doesn't want to do any harm, get trapped anywhere, or ever die, there is this other self seen from the outside, a six-foot-three ex-athlete weighing at least two-thirty . . . a shameless consumer of gasoline, electricity, newspapers, hydrocarbons, carbohydrates. A boss, in a shiny suit.

What redeems Rabbit is that, inside his brutish exterior, he is tender, feminine, and empathetic, like Leopold Bloom, the more intelligent and complex character who inspired him. Lying in the hospital, he "thinks fondly of those dead bricklayers who bothered to vary their rows at the top of the three buildings across the street . . . these men of another century up on their scaffold." Sometimes, eating meat, he can even imagine how it felt to be that animal before it was killed, can apprehend "the stupid monotony of a cow's life" in the taste of beef. He is curious, inquiring, not bigoted—or at least his bigotry is benign, as in his Protestant envy of the chosen people: "Harry has this gentile prejudice that Jews do everything a little better than other people, something about all those generations crouched over the Talmud and watch-repair tables, they aren't as distracted as other persuasions, they don't expect to have as much fun." It must be a great religion, he thinks, "once you get past the circumcision."

This is affable and easy-going compared with that other long-running fictional American, Nathan Zuckerman, who is unable to make light of prejudice in Rabbit's way. They are opposites, of course: famous author vs. obscure salesman, relentlessly eloquent taboo-breaker vs. muddled consumer, thin Jew vs. fat Protestant. The nearest thing to a Roth character in the Rabbit books is Skeeter, who speaks with all the rage and the obsessive energy of a black Portnoy. Yet both Angstrom and Zuckerman are heart cases. In *Rabbit, Run* Harry's unforgiving mother has been taught at church that "men are all heart and women are all body," and Harry's heart, where "guilt and responsibility slide together like two substantial shadows," beats loudly through the book. Now it is clogged, vulnerable, a second self exposed. In *The Counterlife*, Nathan's (and/or his brother Henry's) hearts are their manhood; only a heart operation will re-

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themselves to work in machines
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and the girlfriends and the prints

on the office walls and art's as good
as anything to buy since nothing's
as good as they'd hoped.
If the Jaguar's green enough

and shiny, then when the crunch
of gravel in the drive rises
as he clears his mind
like a palate (sorbet, lime)

and the trees lean into the hood
("bonnet," given the car's lineage
longer than his own)
then there lies the center

he sought all these years,
there in the beating heart
of the machine, stamped out
proof, not the vulgar one-of-a-kind

but first of a long line, dynastic,
like an afternoon free and a fountain
where the man parks your car.

Bin Ramke

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new their potency. Maybe this coincidental anxiety about heart disease is just an inevitable phase for middle-aged male American writers. But both, in their dramatically different fictional ways, are speaking about the difficulties of life as an American man. To "have a heart" is to be unmanly; and both feel acutely the dangers of being unmanned, whether by surgery, loss of libido, feminism, or oblivion.

Zuckerman, though, like Herzog or Humboldt, speaks his author's language, whereas Rabbit doesn't sound like Updike. This makes life easier for Updike, since people don't go around accusing him of losing his Toyota franchise or making love to his daughter-in-law. But it also adds to our sense of Rabbit's unmanly helplessness—he seems to be caught inside a language that is strange to him, but by which he is defined. It is a virtuoso operation, even to those readers who feel, inappropriately I think, that Rabbit is being socially condescended to by his author. But what is it for?

It's quite clear that Updike can write in any version of American he chooses. Why has he returned so often, in between novels of immense erudition and sophistication like *Roger's Version*, to this elaborate, even perverse match of dumb subject and lyrical, fastidious text? The voice of the Rabbit books, so unlike Rabbit's, is wise, mournful, elegiac, telling us wry truths: "Life is noise," or "Within a hospital you feel there is no other world," or "We grow more ins and outs with age." Rabbit as Everyman? That's easy enough. But the voice does something stranger still. Everything it looks at—and how much it looks at!—changes its shape as it gets put on the page. This is the most metaphorical prose writing in American fiction, except for Melville's.

And like Melville's, Updike's metaphors are born of that old American transcendentalist desire that the things of this world should stand for something, and not be mere junk. "And some certain significance lurks in all things," Melville's Ishmael hopes, "else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher." In the debate over belief in *Roger's Version*, the god-fearing computer scientist complains about the arguments of a skeptical Jewish bacteriologist: "This is all metaphor." " 'What isn't?' Kriegman says. 'Like Plato says, shadows at the back of the cave.' "

Rabbit's Platonism makes us see everything as meaningful, but also as shadowy and strange. His heart, of course, has the star role as shape-shifter: it can be a fist, an amphitheater, a drum, a galley slave, a ballplayer waiting for the whistle. But the solid world outside is also undone by images of floating and drowning, so that Rabbit's tumble into the Gulf of Mexico, an incident itself rich with metaphor ("Air, light, water, silence all clash inside his head in a thunderous demonstration of mercilessness"), spills out into the rest of the book as a figure for his mortality: "His heart floats wounded in the sea of ebbing time."

No object, no creature, is too ordinary or too technical to be subjected to metaphor. Things used to being treated figuratively—birds, trees—get a new treatment, always cunningly connected to what Rabbit might observe: birds call "like the fluttering tinsel above a used car lot," a pink dogwood blooms "like those old photos of atomic bomb-test clouds in the days when we were still scared of the Russians." Even Harry's uncircumcised hard-on makes an American poem: "You can feel the foreskin sweetly tug back, like freezing cream lifting the paper cap on the old-time milk bottles."

Updike is rightly admired for the dazzling thinginess of the Rabbit books. British readers of *Rabbit at Rest* especially love getting so much American stuff, and praise Updike most for "his meticulous taxonomy" of "the material nature of the world" and for his "everywhere saluting and memorializing American superabundance." Where Updike is dispraised by British critics, it's for doing too much American materialism, "pigging out" on it, just like Rabbit. But such a criticism misses the point. For Updike, as for Rabbit, there is no such thing as too much of what is called (in *Roger's Version*) "the irrepressible combinations of the real." Rabbit's last word, "Enough," is carefully preceded by "Maybe."

But whether it is too much or enough, Updike's America is surely there: Brewer and its suburb, Mt. Judge, are accepted as Pennsylvanian places historically surveyed from the 1940s to the 1990s. Neither reader nor author feels any embarrassment about identifying Brewer as Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania. Like William Carlos Williams's Paterson, Rabbit's Brewer is a real, recognizable place—and it keeps posing the question of whether there are no ideas but in things.

Still, how peculiar these metaphor-laden, metamorphosing, cluttered landscapes are! Nobody can "do" the strangeness of American places better, not David Lynch or Sam Shepard or Nathanael West or Don DeLillo. Look at the lovingly horrified attention he gives to what for anyone else would be a non-space, the corridor outside the Angstroms' door in "Valhalla Village," 59600 Pindo Palm Boulevard:

> The corridor is floored in peach-colored carpet and smells of air freshener, to mask the mildew that comes into every closed space in Florida. A crew comes through three times a week vacuuming and the rug gets lathered and the walls worked once a month, and there are plastic bouquets in little things like basketball hoops next to every numbered door and a mirror across from the elevator plus a big runny-colored green and purple vase on a table shaped like a marble half-moon, but it is still not a space in which you want to linger.

Rabbit's final run through Southern poverty and north Florida theme parks to this out-of-season condo is a masterpiece of verisimilitude; but this is verisimilitude hovering on the borders of the surreal. When Rabbit turns the key into the empty apartment, "There are no cobwebs to brush against his face, no big brown hairy spiders scuttling away on the carpet." But even without tipping it over into American Gothic, this place, with its shell collection and its formica and its fake-bamboo desk and its dead TV screen, is scary enough: "a tight structure hammered together to hold a brimming amount of fear."

Florida is made for surreality, but even in solid old Brewer, Pennsylvania, there is something untrustworthy about the landscape. Updike has Rabbit drive through his "boyhood city" over and over again, minutely noting the changes from industrial energy to postindustrial decay and renewal: mills turned into factories, railroads into garbage dumps, music stores into running-shoe emporiums, churches into community centers, hotels into Motor Inns. Defunct movie houses and retitled restaurants haunt Rabbit's wary vision of the present: "Johnny Frye's Chophouse was the original name for this restaurant on Weiser Square, which became the Cafe Barcelona in the Seventies and then the Crepe House later in the decade and now has changed hands again and calls itself Salad Binge." And in the course of this poetry of naming, appearances come adrift.

So Rabbit's memory, which cuts a deep, narrow slice into the American past, fuses with the narrative's metaphors to make an elegy for our world. Even the tastelessly caricatured Japanese Toyota representative, who has come to pass stern judgment on the Angstroms' American mismanagement of the franchise ("Too much disorder. Too much dogshit."), ends up sounding like Tasso, in a transformation only Updike could bring about: " 'Things change,' says Mr. Shimerda. 'Is world's sad secret.' " *Il mondo invec-*

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chia, E invecchiando intristisce.

If everything is flux, what becomes of our selves? Rabbit's sensuality, materialism, greed, and fear—his ordinariness—have been necessary to Updike because they embody so powerfully his discussion of the soul's relation to the body. Because Rabbit is so fleshy and gross, so tender and frightened, he brings home the human condition. In *Roger's Version*, whose debate on science and belief could be read as a chilling scholastic commentary on the Gospels according to Rabbit, Roger considers the heresy of Tertullian, who believes "that the flesh cannot be dispensed with by the soul," and will be resurrected. An Angstromian version of his proposition would read: "Dear Flesh: Do come to the party. Signed, your pal, the Soul." Roger can see the attraction:

> In our bodily afterlife, are we to know again ulcers and wounds and fevers and gout and the wish for death?... And yet, my goodness, pile on the cavils as you will, old hypothetical heretic or pagan, we do want to live forever, much as we are, perhaps with some of the plumbing removed, but not even that would be strictly necessary, if the alternative is being nothing, being nonexistent specks of yearning in the bottomless belly of *nihil*.

Under surgery, Rabbit is queasily aware of the peculiar relationship between the self, the soul, "the me that talks inside him all the time," and "this pond of bodily fluids and their slippery conduits." Where does the "me" that talks go, if it is separated from its home of flesh? Rabbit has a terrible fear of falling into the void. The Lockerbie disaster preoccupies his imagination, very much as space travel did in *Rabbit Redux*. The dread of the unsleeping universe is picked up from that novel; in *Rabbit Redux* he thinks: "The universe is unsleeping, neither ants nor stars sleep, to die will be to be forever wide awake." Here, again: "Stars do not sleep, but above the housetops and tree crowns shine in a cold arching dusty sprinkle. Why do we sleep? What do we rejoin?"

Rabbit resents the little space he has to occupy, penned round within the limits of his life. But he hunkers down into it too, like a creature in his burrow. Outside is what met the passengers on the plane over Lockerbie. "It is truly there under him, vast as a planet at night, gigantic and totally his. His death. The burning intensifies in his sore throat and he feels all but suffocated by terror." His fear is our fear; Updike makes us know it.

HERMIONE LEE is the author of *Willa Cather: Double Lives* (Pantheon).

Dangerous Liaisons

BY DAVID CANNADINE

Road To Divorce: England 1530-1987 by Lawrence Stone

(Oxford University Press, 460 pp., $29.95)

"Those whom God hath joined together," proclaims the English *Book of Common Prayer*, in solemn and binding exhortation, "let no man put asunder." And, until relatively recently, it was God rather than man who had his way in regulating matrimonial matters. For most of the last 500 years, marriage in England has been regarded as a sacred and indissoluble contract, and the overwhelming majority of such unions have been terminated only by the death of one of the partners. Even if the husband was the king, the combined weight of religious teaching and popular morality was such that divorce was an extremely rare and hazardous enterprise. In 1529 Henry VIII sought to rid himself of his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, but he was only able to do so by unleashing on his country a political, social, and religious revolution understatedly described as the Reformation. In 1820 George IV tried to divorce his wife, Queen Caroline, but a sudden, massive upsurge of hostile public opinion made it impossible for him to obtain the necessary parliamentary legislation. And in 1936 King Edward VIII failed in his attempt to keep his throne and marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson, not because she was his mistress, nor because she was an American, but because she was twice divorced, and it was widely believed that neither the British public nor the British empire would stand for that.

Since the Second World War, however, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of divorces in England, and once again the royal family's experience vividly illustrates this sudden and remarkable change in attitudes and practices. In the mid-1950s Princess Margaret publicly terminated her romance with the divorced Peter Townsend, on the grounds that marrying him would have been contrary to the teaching of the Church of England. But her marriage to Lord Snowdon was dissolved in 1978, and since then matrimonial breakdown has become almost as commonplace in royal circles as fines for speeding. The parents of the Princess of Wales have been divorced, as have the parents of the Duchess of York. The younger brother of the Duke of Kent and his eldest son both married women whose previous husbands were alive. And although it has not yet been formally dissolved, the marriage between Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips has irretrievably broken down.

In the early 1860s, at the time of the wedding of the then Prince of Wales, Walter Bagehot observed that "a royal marriage is a princely edition of a universal fact, and as such it rivets mankind." Today the word "divorce" could be readily substituted, and the remark would still be almost equally appropriate. In the Britain of the 1990s, it is widely reported that one-third of all marriages now being entered into will be terminated by divorce. (The figure in the United States is even higher: at least one-half.) Even Mrs. Thatcher, for all her pious talk of reviving and restoring what she calls "Victorian values," is not untainted by these developments; her husband, Denis, has been married and divorced once before.

Self-evidently, this explosion of divorce is a subject of great contemporary concern, not just in Britain, but throughout the Western world. Will the rates rise even higher? Is the social fabric disintegrating? Should governments intervene to make divorce more difficult? As with many current social problems, however, these questions need to be posed and answered in a proper historical perspective. What happened if a marriage broke down in the days when, for the majority of people, divorce was virtually impossible? How was it that a privileged minority were, nevertheless, able to obtain separation or dissolution? And how can we explain the dramatic shift from widespread non-divorce before 1940 to the position today, where divorce is essentially an administrative convenience?

It is to answering these questions that Lawrence Stone has devoted his most recent book. As in his previous works, he tackles a large subject, raises important issues, and settles them briskly and provocatively. He ranges with ease and au-

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Hussein and Arafat – Birds of a Feather

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On Monday, October 8,1990, on the Jewish festival of Succoth, about 20,000 Jews assembled for prayer at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, the holiest place in the Jewish religion. Two mosques are also located on Temple Mount, high above the Wall. Because of the indulgence and respect for other religions, the Israeli authorities allow them to operate freely and fully under the jurisdiction of Moslem religious authorities. Suddenly and without any provocation, whipped into a frenzy by their clerics, a raging mob of 4,000 Moslem Arabs stormed out of the mosques and loosed a barrage of rocks, bricks, and Molotov cocktails on the worshipping crowd below them. Twenty-eight people were severely injured. By miracle, nobody was killed. The mob then attacked the Israeli police post and set it afire. The police responded, first with tear gas and then rubber bullets. When those ran out and when 40 police were at the point of being lynched they opened fire with live ammunition. Twenty Arabs died and twenty martyrs had been created.

What are the facts?

■ There is no question in anybody's mind that the bloody incident was engineered and organized by Saddam Hussein, the "Butcher of Baghdad", and Yasser Arafat, the master terrorist and "president" of the non-existent state of "Palestine'. After virtually every Arab leader has turned against Hussein, Yasser Arafat remains steadfastly loyal to him. And why not? Both have the destruction of Israel at the very top of their agendas -- in fact Arafat has no other agenda; he surely doesn't care at all about the fate of Kuwait. The bloody incident on the Temple Mount served the purposes of both. They rightly expected that it would take, at least temporarily, the heat and the focus off Saddam Hussein and had the potential to weaken the tenuous common front between the United States and our newfound Arab "allies". As to Arafat, the incident was certain to put the "Palestinian problem", which because of the troubles in the Gulf had taken a back seat, once again into the spotlight. That twenty Palestinian Arabs had died was a small price to pay, because human life is cheap for both Hussein and Arafat. Naturally, they had hoped that a few hundred Jews would also die in that fusillade of rocks. But, by great good fortune, that turned out not to be.

Birds of a Feather: Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat, two enemies of the U.S. in loving embrace.

■ One of Saddam Hussein's and Yasser Arafat's main themes is the linkage of any possible withdrawal from Kuwait with a demand for Israeli withdrawal from the "West Bank". This is a ludicrous proposal and, so far at least, most of the Western world has called it just that. If the world's minorities problems must be solved, why not address the "Irish question", which has been festering for centuries? Why not settle the age-old grievances of the Basques, those of the ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia and, closest to home and right in Iraq, the justified despair of the Kurds, whose aspirations Saddam Hussein "solves" by poison gassing thousands, and by forcefully relocating the rest? Iraq has annexed Kuwait in an act of aggression motivated by greed. Israel came to administer (not to annex!) the "West Bank" and the Gaza strip as the result of its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has always been ready to negotiate the ultimate status of these territories. It promised to do so in the Camp David Accords as the result of which it also returned the vast Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.

By his actions and by his statements, Yasser Arafat has clearly demonstrated that he is a bird of the same feather as Saddam Hussein. Arafat's immediate ambition is to shift the focus of interest from the Gulf to Israel, in order to gloss over the crimes of Hussein, to change the conflict of the World vs. Iraq into the conflict of the Arabs vs. Israel, and thus to break up the fragile coalition between the United States and its Arab "allies". The recent bloody incidents in Jerusalem were clearly provoked for that purpose by Arafat and the PLO, in connivance with Saddam Hussein. Regrettably, the United States in great haste, without even ascertaining the facts, and in order to curry favor with our new Arab "allies" (among them the murderous Syrians), introduced a resolution into the Security Council of the United Nations that condemned Israel's actions.

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thority across half a millennium of English legal, demographic, familial, religious, sexual, and cultural history. And he provides an unforgettable picture of one of the most tragic of all human experiences: the irreparable breakdown of intimate and affective relations between men and women.

As Stone rightly points out, it is impossible to understand divorce in England without first understanding marriage; and, judged by the practices that prevailed in contemporary Europe, marriage in England during the early modern period was distinctly unusual. This was partly because neither the church nor the state was as fully in control of proceedings as was the case in many continental countries. Of course, many couples married according to the rules and rituals of the Church of England, and had their unions recorded in the parish register. But a remarkably large number (exactly how many is uncertain) did not.

Some settled for a "contract marriage," which merely involved the verbal exchange of promises before two witnesses, and thus offered ample opportunity for misunderstanding, deceit, and later denial. Others preferred "clandestine marriage," which was essentially a contract marriage, topped off by an irregular religious service, illicitly performed by a clergyman, and in breach of ecclesiastical law. Not until 1753, with the passing of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke's Marriage Act, were contract and clandestine marriages outlawed; and only in 1836, with the establishment of civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths, did secular marriage become legally possible.

But it was not just that marriage in early modern England took a variety of forms and was chaotically administered. It was further distinguished from continental practices because the husband enjoyed near-absolute control and authority over his wife. Especially after 1688, England's all-male governing elite believed that they lived in the freest country in the world. But their wives might have been forgiven for taking rather a different view. In legal terms, they were totally subordinate: their person, their possessions, their income, and their children were all part of their husband's property; in the eyes of the law, wives possessed no separate, autonomous existence of their own.

In part, this was the product of the prevailing ideology of patriarchalism, which placed the husband on top in every sense. But it was also the product of the patrilineal system of inheritance, whereby property almost invari-

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ably passed in the direct male line. Hence the widely accepted justification for the double sexual standard: husbands could be adulterous with relative impunity, but if a wife slept with another man she might produce an illegitimate son, which would threaten the direct transference of property in the family from one generation to the next.

Inevitably, both the manner in which marriages were made and the grossly inequitable distribution of power within them left their mark on the ways in which marriages were broken. Strictly speaking, divorce in England was illegal from the Reformation until 1857. Other Protestant nations established their own divorce laws, but for largely accidental reasons the medieval church's absolute ban on divorce remained intact and unchanged in England. The result was that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, England simultaneously possessed the laxest marriage laws and the strictest divorce laws in Europe. They were administered—if that is the correct word—by three separate legal systems: ecclesiastical law, equity law, and common law. And each had its separate courts, judges, lawyers, procedures, and rules of evidence. Only the rich, the determined, and the well-connected could entrust their affairs to such bodies with any hope of success.

Still, not surprisingly, marriages did fail in early modern England. How did people use, twist, and defy the law to deal with marital breakdown? And what were their chances of obtaining a full, legal divorce, with permission to remarry? Among those at the lower end of the social scale, who were ill-educated and possessed little or no property, there were probably thousands of unreported desertions and elopements. Wives were driven out by poverty, brutality, alcohol, or adultery; husbands just left home, and often established a new relationship, or even a bigamous marriage. Inevitably, it was the abandoned wives who suffered the most, reduced to poverty, degradation, and despair, especially if they were left with the children to support.

An alternative method was to authenticate plebeian separation by making it public: hence the extraordinary custom known as "wife-sale," a transfer of property closely imitating the ritual of a cattle or sheep market. If a husband wished to be rid of his wife, and provided there was another man who wanted her, the woman was put up for sale in the local marketplace, with a halter round her neck, and was sold for a price to the other man, thereby breaking the previous marriage in the most public way possible. Between 1780 and 1850, there were 300 recorded cases of such wife-sales, but the legal basis of such ceremonial transactions was highly suspect.

Among the property-owning middling classes and their social superiors, the most popular way to end an unhappy marriage was by informal deed of private separation, a practice that developed during the late seventeenth century and had become widely used by the time of the Napoleonic Wars. Its advantage was that it enabled a growing number of incompatible but non-adulterous couples to break free of an insupportable cohabitation. Like wife-sale, it was a collusive means of self-divorce, but since it was an essentially private arrangement, with deeds drawn up by attorneys, it avoided public embarrassment and expensive litigation, and it usually resulted in terms that were satisfactory to both parties. The personal, legal, and economic safeguards were spelled out in detail for the wife, and even the custody and the maintenance of the children were subject to negotiation. As such, it showed how an officially non-divorcing society could devise its own quasi-legal instruments to cope with the reality of marital discord. But for all its widespread use, the legal status of the private separation deed was highly dubious, the wife's property was always liable to be seized by her husband, and the only options available after separation were loneliness (which was usually the lot of the wife), adultery, or bigamy (which were more frequently the choice of the husband).

Judicial separation was a more serious matter than private separation, since this involved expensive and extensive litigation in the ecclesiastical courts, and there was still no possibility of obtaining permission to remarry. It could only be granted on two grounds, adultery and/or life-threatening behavior, and suits were much more frequently brought by men than by women. If a husband could prove that his wife had been adulterous, he could obtain separation from her without having to pay any form of maintenance.

But the hearing could take up to two years, and the rules of evidence were particularly idiosyncratic. Neither the husband, nor his wife, nor her alleged lover could give evidence; all testimonies had to be in writing; and there had to be two witnesses to every act. Almost invariably, it was the servants who provided (or made up) the evidence, and as the foremost historian of the English aristocracy, Stone is at his best in describing the ambiguous relationship between those below and above stairs. Servants came and went with bewildering rapidity, even in

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the greatest of houses. In accordance with the conventional wisdom of the double standard, they were more likely to inform a master of his wife's adultery than vice versa. And they testified in court for a variety of motives: duty, loyalty, affection, spite, revenge, greed, or even just plain curiosity.

The next step was a successful action at common law for what was quaintly referred to as "criminal conversation." Since a wife was legally her husband's property, her seduction by another man was deemed to amount to the ultimate act of trespass. In an earlier time, the cuckolded husband might have sought redress by challenging his wife's seducer to a duel. But by the seventeenth century, it became more common to sue him instead for substantial damages. These actions for criminal conversation reached their peak between the 1790s and the 1820s. Extensive damages were awarded, and detailed court reporting lead to widespread publicity of the most salacious kind.

But at the very same time they were beginning to incur widespread criticism. In no other European country was it possible to trade honor for cash in this sordid way. The proceedings were grossly unjust to the wife, who could not appear in court and could not defend herself. And many plaintiffs refused to accept what they regarded as tainted money as damages. Indeed, for most men, the only incentive to instigate an action for criminal conversation was that by the late eighteenth century, a successful outcome was the essential precondition for the ultimate act of marital separation: full divorce by private act of Parliament.

In the aftermath of the Reformation, divorce and remarriage were simply not available in Protestant England. But in 1700, the Duke of Norfolk succeeded in dissolving his marriage by petitioning Parliament for a private act, and thereafter this became the only accepted legal means whereby men of great rank and wealth could divorce their wives and remarry—provided they had already obtained a judicial separation in the ecclesiastical court, and won an action for criminal conversation at common law. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the overwhelming majority of petitioners were rich, titled landowners. But thereafter, and as the numbers increased, they were drawn from a wider—though still necessarily prosperous—social background. As with actions for criminal conversation, parliamentary divorce markedly discriminated against the wife. It was her adultery that provided the only grounds for such a measure; she herself could not bring an action for divorce against her husband; and in common law, it was the husband who had sole right to the custody of the children. Not surprisingly, many divorced wives were lonely and unhappy, and often found it difficult to re-establish themselves in polite society.

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Three conclusions emerge from Stone's comprehensive survey of separation and divorce in early modern England. The first is that the whole business was overwhelmingly weighted in favor of men: many wives were subjected to beating, starving, locking up, expulsion from the marital bed, imprisonment in mad houses, and infection with venereal diseases. The double standard enabled husbands to commit adultery with relative impunity, whereas for a wife it almost invariably spelled the end of her marriage; and the legal procedures for separation and divorce were emphatically biased toward the husband. Second, the system was equally prejudiced in favor of the rich, the well-born, and the powerful. Litigation in the ecclesiastical courts or at common law was time consuming and expensive, and a parliamentary divorce cost at least £5,000. For those without substantial means, these options were simply unavailable. And the third is that only the very tiniest minority actually resorted to law, or to Parliament, to resolve their marital difficulties. In the early nineteenth century, only one marriage in 3,000 ended up in court, and between 1700 and 1857, the total number of parliamentary divorce acts obtained scarcely exceeded 300.

How was it that this uniquely restrictive and repressive system was eventually reformed, so that divorce in England became as easily obtainable as anywhere else in the Western world? As Stone reminds us, arguments were advanced that marriages should be dissolved on the grounds of irreconcilable incompatibility and mutual hatred from the time of Milton onward. But it was only during the early nineteenth century, as attitudes toward women and the family became less patriarchally authoritarian and more governed by feelings of mutual affection, that demands for reform gained momentum. In part, this was because the old system had become largely discredited. Judicial separation via the ecclesiastical courts was an effective incitement to adultery; actions for criminal conversation discriminated against women in a way that seemed increasingly unacceptable; and parliamentary divorce was little more than a lottery unjustly reserved for the rich. Put more positively, there was a growing desire to bring divorce under the comprehensive secular control of the state, to overhaul the antiquated and inefficient legal system, to create a single integrated judicial structure, and to free women from the worst excesses of legal subordination and the double standard.

As these proposals suggest, the demand for reform came from lawyers, politicians, and well-connected upper-class women, rather than from crusading feminists, and they scored their first great success with the Divorce Reform Act of 1857, which after extended debate was finally forced through by the prime minister, Lord Palmerston. It abolished ecclesiastical courts, the action for criminal conversation, and parliamentary divorce, and concentrated all matrimonial litigation in a new secular High Court in London. It enabled wives to sue their husbands for divorce, made provision for awarding the custody of children to either parent, and protected the property and earnings of separated wives from seizure by their husband.

But it did not do away entirely with the double standard, and it made no attempt to make divorce more readily available to the poorer classes of society. In 1912 a Royal Commission recommended complete equality of access to the divorce courts on the part of men and women, and in 1923 this duly became the law of the land. But it was only in 1937 that the Royal Commission's other major proposal—recognizing desertion, cruelty, habitual drunkenness, and incurable insanity as valid grounds for divorce, in addition to adultery—was embodied in the Divorce Reform Act, which was skillfully piloted through Parliament by A. P. Herbert, an independent back-bench MP.

From the perspective of the 400 years in which there had been no liberalization of the English divorce laws, these extensive reforms seem long overdue. Yet in practice, none of the legislation passed between 1857 and 1937 ushered in a divorce revolution. By 1914 there were only 800 divorces a year, in a coun-

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try with over 6 million married couples, and most of these were probably explained by a shift in categories, as husbands and wives who had previously separated, either privately or judicially, now took advantage of the changes in the law and got divorced instead. The First World War led to a temporary tripling of divorce rates: lonely wives entered into adulterous liaisons while their husbands were at the front, and there was a sudden upsurge in hasty, juvenile marriages. But by the 1930s the annual divorce rate had settled down to 4,000 a year, and much of this apparent increase was probably another statistical illusion, as members of the lower middle classes with failed marriages gained access to the courts for the first time, thanks to the establishment of legal aid. For in sentiment and in practice, interwar Britain remained overwhelmingly a non-divorcing—indeed, an anti-divorcing—society, as King Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson learned to their cost.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the divorce rate shot up to an unprecedented 60,000 a year—partly because the events of 1939-45 had destabilized many marriages, and partly because legal aid was now very freely available under a Labour Government, which meant that poor people were able to obtain divorces for the first time in large numbers. But in the 1950s the divorce rate leveled off at fewer than 25,000 a year, and it was only in the very changed social, moral, cultural, and political climate of the 1960s that the figures rose dramatically, from 24,000 at the beginning of the decade to 54,000 at the end. In 1966 two independent working parties, one made up of lawyers, the other of clergymen, recommended radical changes in the divorce laws. They urged that divorce should no longer be considered religiously or morally objectionable: instead, it should be available on demand, as a legal remedy for irretrievable matrimonial breakdown. It was this revolutionary proposal that was embodied in the Divorce Reform Act of 1969, which was guided through Parliament by another backbench MP, Leo Abse. The result of this legislation is that rich and poor, men and women, royalty and Cabinet ministers can divorce with equal ease and relative speed. And that is precisely what has happened: in 1985, 160,000 divorces took place in England and Wales.

How is this "divorce revolution," correctly described by Stone as "the most profound and far-reaching change to have occurred in the last 500 years," to be explained? Clearly, it will no longer suffice to write it off as a statistical mirage: since the 1960s the massive increase in the number of divorces suggests a correspondingly unprecedented increase in the number of marital breakdowns. But as Stone rightly points out, this is very much a global phenomenon, and can only be explained in the most nebulous and general terms. Changes in moral values and sexual attitudes mean that the traditional constraints of religion and public opinion are no longer as powerful as they were. The legal, sexual, and financial emancipation of women has also clearly been of the greatest significance. And the pervasive culture of instant personal gratification has largely subverted the traditional idea of marriage as a long-term relationship based on duties, sacrifices, and responsibilities.

Whatever the benefits arising from easier divorce, and whatever the explanations for this change, Stone is not entirely convinced that the results have been for the better. More children than ever are suffering because of the breakup of their parents' marriages. And divorce that is too easy to obtain may be at least as damaging to individuals and to society as divorce that is too difficult.

This is a remarkable story and, for all its immense legal and technical complexity, Stone handles it with his customary assurance and panache. It is bound to give rise to controversy, and Stone would doubtless be extremely disappointed if it did not. As in all his work, he is much more forthcoming on the elite than on the majority of the population, and on men than on women. Some readers may be offended by the brisk, detached, and matter-of-fact tone, which does not always seem appropriate to the tragic and traumatic subject with which it deals. (Although, in fairness to Stone, it should be mentioned that two further volumes of individual case studies—*Uncertain Unions* and *Broken Lives*—will follow shortly.)

Despite the analysis of atypical separations and infrequent divorces, much about the causes and incidence of marital breakdown in the early modern period still remains cloudy. And the rather odd proportioning of the book is more a reflection of Stone's sources and expertise than of the substantive historical issues themselves. Most of his research is based on ecclesiastical court records, from 1660 to 1857, which means he gives a great deal more space to the early modern period, when divorce was exceptionally rare, than to the last 100 years, when it became commonplace.

But this broad perspective yields one final historical irony, which Stone understandably relishes. The contemporary practice of easy, almost relaxed, divorce

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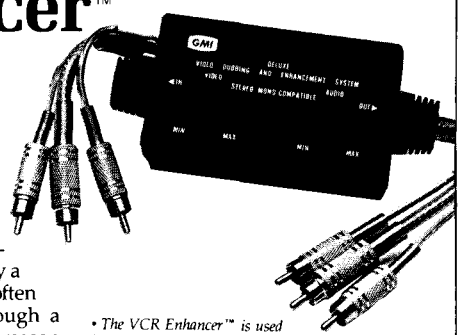

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may seem a far cry from the rigid and unforgiving world of our Victorian forebears. But in the longer term this apparently novel and uncertain revolution is not so unprecedented as it may at first appear. Today in England, many couples live together before (or without) marrying, make only private commitments to each other, and beget and bring up their children out of wedlock. And one-third of all the marriages that *are* legally entered into end abruptly and in an untimely way. But all this was also true in the early modern period. The only significant difference is that then it was death that undermined the family; now it is divorce.

In this perspective, the dramatic rise in the divorce rate during the last 100 years is merely a compensatory mechanism for the contemporaneous decline in adult mortality. This leads to a further irony, which even Stone fails to notice. Margaret Thatcher may have wished to restore the stern and unbending attitudes of the nineteenth century. But as far as the rules governing the making and breaking of marriage in England today are concerned, it is *pre*-Victorian practices that are once again firmly in the ascendant.

DAVID CANNADINE is the author most recently of *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (Yale University Press).

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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 2*

study is a classic, surely, but not outdated. Her findings are echoed in interviews I conducted with rural and urban teen mothers in the mid-1980s, in recent ethnographies, and in a quantitative analysis of a national sample of mothers.

Moreover, whether kin networks are stronger or weaker now than in the past is not the key question. Instead, the question is: Given that poor mothers must depend on kin networks to reduce hardship, are they more or less likely to get that support when they are younger or older?

Ms. Hulbert also accuses me of not considering long-term issues. Apparently she is unaware of our recent study comparing long-term outcomes for a national sample of sisters, where one was a teen mother and the other was not. We discovered that the sisters who postponed childbearing were no more likely to graduate from high school than the sisters who were teen mothers.

I am deeply troubled that lack of access to health care, child care, education, and employment opportunities makes teen childbearing a tolerable choice in some poor communities. This is true not because poor teens face ideal circumstances for childbearing now, but because unless there are radical changes in social policy, their circumstances will never be ideal. Meanwhile, they face diminishing future prospects for health and social support.

ARLINE T. GERONIMUS
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Ann Hulbert replies:

I relied on Children's Defense Fund figures to support my claim that neonatal mortality rates are slightly higher among the children of black teenagers than those of mothers in their 20s. Infant mortality rates (death within the first year, not the first month) are significantly higher among babies born to black teenagers.

Not very much is known about how families or "kin networks" cope with teenage parenthood. Frank Furstenberg, who has long been at work in the field, suspects that assumptions about successful cooperation among kin have been naive, overlooking widespread instability and the toll (financial and emotional) exacted on the entire family.

As Mr. Furstenberg notes, some differences did emerge in Ms. Geronimus's sibling research (which is drawn from small samples that may not be representative): sisters who waited to have children were more likely to have been educated beyond high school and to be currently married. ●

TRB *continued from page 4*

Hussein's nuclear and chemical weapons programs, his dictatorial rule, and so on were hardly a secret before he invaded Kuwait. No one minded way back then.

"In 1936," says Vice President Quayle, embroidering the appeasement metaphor, "the world faced a rather similar challenge when Adolf Hitler . . . moved German troops into the Rhineland." We all know where that led. But the world did not react on that occasion with a virtually airtight economic embargo and a totally effective military deterrent against further aggression. If it had, war against Hitler might not have been necessary. And no one would have called that appeasement.

To be sure, there is disingenuousness and fatuity on the other side of the Iraq debate too. Most of it concerns the embargo. The essential moral question is whether reversing Hussein's conquest of Kuwait is worth the cost in blood. That question was getting a better airing three months ago than it is now. Now opponents of military action can hide behind the embargo. Let the embargo work, they say. Fine. But for how long? And what if it doesn't work? This one might, but most do not. Ted Kennedy says give it until next August 2. But he shouldn't get until August 2 to say what he'd do then.

If Bush thought the embargo was a way to ease us toward war without a four-square debate, he was too clever. It has become a way for members of Congress to oppose the war he wants without taking responsibility for the consequences. And practically everyone now understands—though the administration continues to deny it—that Bush cannot go to war without congressional approval or a constitutional crisis. To my surprise, at least, the War Powers debate seems to have ended without a shot being fired. Conservatives of the pro-war and anti-war varieties are equally insistent that Congress should assemble to ratify their respective views. (Alas, where was this tender concern for the foreign policy role of the legislative branch during the long struggle over our proxy war in Nicaragua?)

The Constitution is about as clear as it can be on this subject. Anyone who thinks the president can launch a premeditated war halfway around the globe all by his lonesome should be stripped of his strict-constructionist epaulets. True, this kind of democratic control of war-making—and the nitpicky debate in advance that goes with it—represents a reversal of the general twentieth-century trend. But that is no bad thing. It might yet save George Bush from the trap he laid for himself when, in a moment of bravado, he said, "This will not stand."

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Hearty fare

AT 1:30 A.M. THE SATURDAY AFter Thanksgiving, I was watching a rented movie and wolfing down leftover apple pie when I got a hard pain in the middle of my chest. Not agony, but a lot worse than indigestion. When it didn't go away, I said to my wife, "This may be a heart attack. Let's go to the hospital." In the emergency room Maalox didn't stop it. Neither did nitroglycerine, and shortly a cardiologist came along to tell me that my blood test showed enzyme elevation, indicating heart damage. I was whisked away to the coronary care unit and wired up to monitoring machines and plastic bags, with competent and friendly nurses scurrying around doing things for me whether I asked or not. Around 10 a.m. the cardiologist reappeared to tell me the enzymes definitely were up, that I was to spend the next two days resting, and that I would then be given an angiogram, to see how much artery blockage and damage there was. Then he would decide whether I needed angioplasty or a bypass. "What about just treating this with medicine?" I meekly suggested. "Not likely," he said. The pain went away Saturday. There was none Sunday. I said to myself, I don't deserve this. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't eat red meat. I exercise. But, I figured, family medical history, stress, and all the salami sandwiches of my youth had caught up with me. Miraculously, though, Monday's angiogram showed no blockage and no heart damage. Tuesday my doctor said, "Technically, you've had a heart attack because enzyme emission indicates cell damage, but there's no reason to keep you in the hospital. Go home. Take it easy for a week. Get some of the stress out of your life."

THIS IS AT LEAST THE 100TH time I've told this story. Friends began calling me in the hospital on Sunday and at home Tuesday and nonstop for the rest of the week. In fact, the phone only stopped ringing when a nurse banned it from my room, saying it was dangerous to my health. The lesson of this, for the patient, is: get someone else to take the calls. Or put an answering machine on your hospital room phone. ("Hi, this is Mort. Here's the latest: the angiogram shows no damage . . .") The lesson for friends of patients is: write a note, preferably funny. It says you care, your friend will save it forever, and it doesn't wear out the person you're worried about. (This doesn't mean I'm not grateful to those who called. I am.)

THIS EVENT GAVE ME MY FIRST real chance, during and between phone calls, to watch C-SPAN, the cable public affairs network that broadcasts live, uninterrupted coverage of major events. During my recovery week the primary subject was the Senate Armed Services hearings on the Gulf, chaired by Sam Nunn. One day I got so riveted by the goings-on (and by the Keating Five hearings on C-SPAN's other channel) that I didn't even brush my teeth until 4:00 in the afternoon. C-SPAN is a far better TV network than ABC, NBC, and CBS, because reality is usually more interesting and less banal than fantasy. Although the big three have elephantine news departments, they and their affiliates stick to their soap operas and sitcoms unless a president's been shot or war's broken out (and it had better be a damned big war, involving Americans, with pictures). And unlike CNN, which has cornered the world market on broadcast news, it doesn't interrupt itself for commercials or exhibit weird news judgment. On November 29 James Baker undoubtedly thought he was speaking live and direct to Saddam Hussein when he made his stern speech from the U.N. Security Council. But CNN was carrying a report on the school dress code crisis in Lubbock, Texas, at the time. To see Baker bristle, Hussein would have to have been downlinked to C-SPAN.

C-SPAN'S COVERAGE IS ALSO BETter than the best of the regular news programs, like "MacNeil/Lehrer" and "Nightline," because the discussions are extended and there are no hosts in the way. If Ted Kennedy is questioning Henry Kissinger, it's *mano a mano* between persons who matter. "What you are advocating leads to no other conclusion than war!" Kennedy erupted. From the horror in his voice, it was pretty clear that for him no result of the Gulf crisis, not Iraq's permanent annexation of Kuwait or even Hussein's domination of the Middle East, could be worse than war, however described. When Kissinger raised the possibility of an air attack against Iraqi military targets, Kennedy charged that 52,000 North Vietnamese civilians had been killed in Kissinger's Christmas bombing of 1972. Ted Koppel might or might not know that Kennedy's figure was an anti-warrior's fantasy, that the death toll really was 1,600, and that, aside from one empty hospital, there was actually very little damage done to civilian targets in 1972, thanks to a then new invention called "smart bombs." Senator John McCain, a pilot and a POW in Vietnam, knew the history cold, and shot Kennedy down with it.

PARTLY BECAUSE THE ADMINISTRAtion initially refused to let its people testify, and partly because Sam Nunn is, after all, a Democrat, the hearings effectively were stacked against President Bush's policy of threatening war to intimidate Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. Former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs William Crowe and David Jones, former Navy Secretary James Webb, strategist Edward Luttwak, and retired General William Odom all cautioned "restraint" for a year to eighteen months. Only Kissinger and former Defense Department official Richard Perle seemed willing to entertain the option of early military action, and only Perle really advocated it. Also, Crowe and Jones were never asked military questions like, "What could we accomplish with air power alone?" They were there as political witnesses, designed to support the Democrats' near-unanimous position that the United States shouldn't go to war. This is a conscientious and popular position, even if it did threaten to undermine Bush's intimidation strategy against Hussein. In our democracy, it had to be vented. And it forced Bush finally to explain himself to the country (albeit at an 11 a.m. press conference, not during prime time), and superbly, assuming that Baker stays tough with Hussein when he gets to the Gulf.

HOURS OF C-SPAN LETS YOU THINK, as you can't during thirty-minute talk shows. Maybe, if Hussein won't leave Kuwait by January 15, there is a way to avoid war by escalating our sanctions policy. We could get the U.N. to declare that our goal is not simply to get Iraq out of Kuwait, but to neutralize Iraq's potential for aggressive (especially unconventional) war. Then the embargo would continue until Hussein reduced his forces and opened his territory to thorough inspection. If he refused, the embargo might continue for five years, after which there'd be nothing left of Iraq's economy or military. We would not need to keep 400,000 troops in the Gulf all that time, but 100,000 or so—just as we have in Korea. Kissinger says this won't work because Saudi society can't take even that level of occupation for an extended period. It's a worthy argument, deserving of debate. In fact, it's a dandy idea for "Nightline" or "MacNeil/Lehrer." We'd learn more if it were on C-SPAN, but who can stay home from work every day to watch?

P.S. BEFORE YOU CALL: THANKS, I'm feeling fine.

MORTON KONDRACKE

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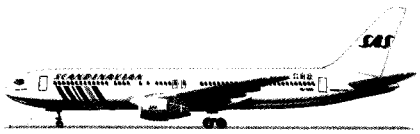

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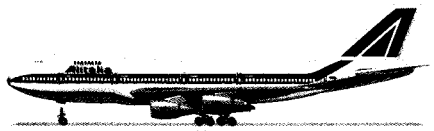
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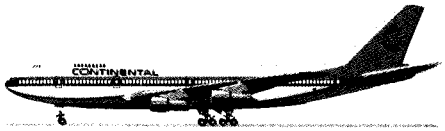

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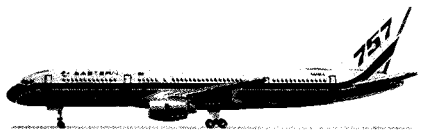

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